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ED'S RANT INVISIBLE BEAUTY

Everyone is exhausted.

At least everyone I know in the cities of America. Hey Europe—holla at me if you're exhausted too. Asia—what's up? Working two jobs, like we are over here? Seriously, I know so few friends who have anything resembling real leisure time. Even with all the benefits of communication technology, transportation and readily accessible basic commodities (food, water, air, *XLR8R Magazine*), people still seem overburdened with life and making it through the week.

The steady flow of bad news from around the globe hasn't helped matters—Sudan, Iraq, Haiti and East Oakland are all having their share of bloodshed and pain, which we can't but help feel a bit helpless to alleviate while struggling to cover our rent, bills and essentials. If John Edwards talked about the two Americas, most of us, especially *XLR8R* readers, only know one of them, the poor one.

I'm exhausted from trying to get our latest Music Technology issue completed in four weeks (a normal production schedule is five), in addition to trying to running in the evenings, making music, doing a record label and volunteering when I can. And compared to most other average San Franciscans, my list of tasks is minimal. I have neither kids to feed nor a business payroll to worry about. So how come I wasn't able to make to even one San Francisco Giants home baseball game? Dude, I'm busy.

The "too busy" syndrome is one of the most sinister aspects of late-20th and early-21st century Western capitalist society. America is exhausted because we're too efficient. We work longer "flex-time" hours, and the increased productivity only leads to job redundancies, outsourced labor and cuts in health benefits. I'm not being harsh, this is the system we live in, and, in other ways, are trapped by. My labor-organizing grandma, who stood in the bread lines of the Depression and fought for better working conditions for the poor, certainly wouldn't call this progress.

Doom and gloom does not a solution make, however. Don't let an electronic music magazine editor's dire assessments keep you from making a positive impact on this world we live in. Musicians and artists add color and beauty to life in such a subtle and amazing way, its almost invisible.

Take our cover artist DJ Premier for instance. His pages-long discography is a testament to how broad of an impact he's made on American music. People will look back 20 years from now, and speak of his canon like we speak of John Coltrane's. A grandiose comparison perhaps, but hip-hop music—just the *music*—is now part of a global lexicon, and there are hundreds who have unknowingly been influenced or copied Primo's approach to creating tracks. Yet most Arts (that's arts with a big A) and media outlets treat architects like Premier like Ralph Ellison's "invisible man."

Another relatively invisible thing that adds beauty to our world is the increasing number of very cleverly designed and written niche community websites. That's right, websites—making the world a better place by creating a space for us to explore, learn and chill the hell out. Some current favorites for down time investigation: amateur dub producers strut their stuff on www.versionist.com, Gothomist sites like www.sfist.com highlight specific cool things about *your* city, and the plethora of indie media sites such www.indiamedia.org and <http://portlandindymedia.org> offer great news, videos and music resources not found in mainstream media. And don't forget *XLR8R.com*'s frequent newswire updates on all the art, music and culture you love.

All I know is that we all create beauty from our exhaustion, and are striving to be more visible. The world may weigh heavy on us now, but we can't forget to embrace and extol the positive benefits of music and art, and their regenerative powers. And if you're trying to reach me and got a busy signal, that just means I'm finally taking some time out for myself.

-Tomas, Editor



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ON THE COVER: DJ Premier by Rayon Richards

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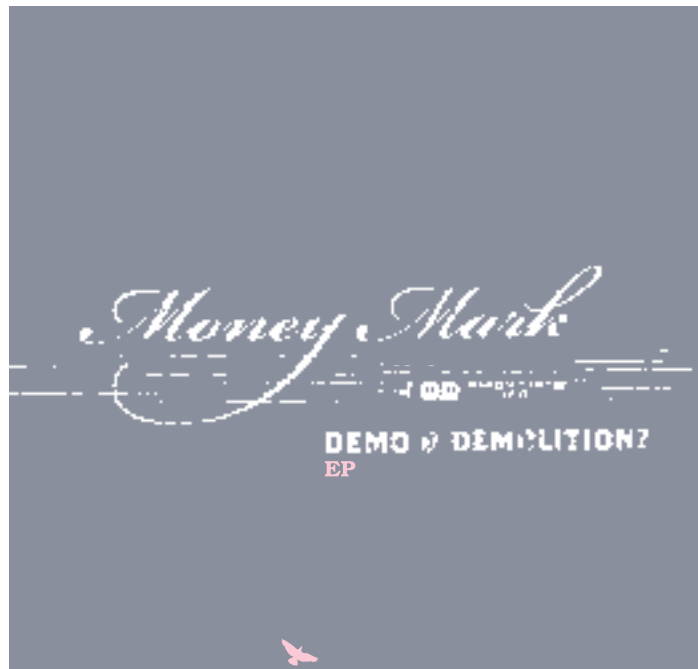
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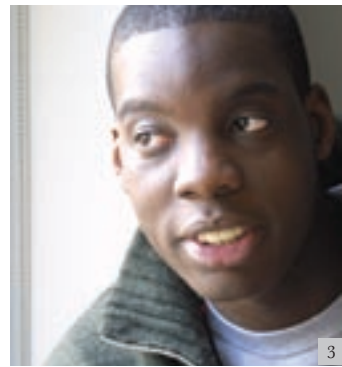
Via Tania is here again w/ a new E.P feat. new music and another amazing remix by John Herndon from Tortoise.



Vast Aire
Pegasus 12"

Back w/ more venom on his third and final single for "Look Mom No Hands."

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1. JESSE SERWER

When he's not studying the fine art of bagel symmetry, Jesse Serwer is a freelance writer and one-third of NYC booty bass/kraut rock hybrid, Gym Class. Leaving behind past careers as a community news reporter and pizza delivery boy, Jesse has written for *Vapors*, *Time Out New York*, *Strength* (R.I.P.), *Slap* and *Rockpile*, and covered things like airport security and failing schools for "hard" newspapers such as *New York Newsday*. Unfortunately, his parking tickets alone tend to outweigh his actual earnings. A Long Island native who grew up on EPMD and Rakim, he's in the early stages of a book on suburban hip-hop.

2. SAIMAN CHOW

Saiman was born in Hong Kong, where he was a ping-pong team champion before moving to the U.S. at the age of 15. When he's not batting balls around or eating ramen, he spends 18 hours a day in a basement, living and working completely isolated from the human race. That is probably why he is able to dream up such genius ideas as an illustration of an egg and sausage cooking on a helmet (see page 6), and it's why he's one of our favorite graphic design superheroes.

3. RAYON RICHARDS

Brooklyn-born photographer Rayon Richards has enjoyed creating images of people since 2000, and his work has been published in *Vibe*, *XXL*, *Fortune*, *Teen People* and *Revolver*. His crusade to bring the gentrification of his native land to its knees continues—his camera doubles as a real-estate demon evil-spirit sucker. Richards enjoyed photographing DJ Premier for this issue. "I found his personality to be as raw and genuine as his beats," he says.

4. DAVID KATZ

A San Francisco native, David Katz has lived in London for the last 16 years. A chance encounter with Jamaica's Super Ape eventually led to him to write *People Funny Boy: The Genius of Lee Scratch Perry and Solid Foundation: An Oral History of Reggae*; he's also contributed to *A Tapestry of Jamaica*, *I-Land Jamaica: From Heartbeat to Revolution* and *The Rough Guide to Reggae*. Katz has co-ordinated and annotated over 50 retrospective collections of Jamaican music, in addition to releasing an original record in France, co-hosting radio programs on three continents and DJing at select international night spots. Presently, Katz's Dub Me Always club nights are held every other Wednesday at The Ritz in Brixton.



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ON THE MARK

Thank you for running the brief interview with Mark Stewart (*XLR8R* #80) in the "Give A Damn" issue. I've been wanting to see him interviewed for the last 12 years or so and tried at one point to set it up myself, but On-U Sound contacts were pretty mercurial, especially before email. Anyway, nice one, and here's a vote for longer, more substantive features in general.

Hal Looby

Tomas responds: Thanks for the kind words Hal. I've been wanting to run a feature on Mark Stewart since before I was at

XLR8R, after having my mind blown by his album *As The Veneer of Democracy Starts To Fade*. Now make sure you go back and read our previous pieces on Adrian Sherwood and Style "Dub Syndicate" Scott (#56). As for longer articles, I would love to oblige as soon as someone convinces me people still have attention spans in between working two jobs and surviving in a Bush Babylon.

BROKEN DREAMS

Of course, I was excited to see *XLR8R* 80 within the physical mass that is my magical snail mail pile, but, to the dismay of not only myself but also to that of my vehicle's CD player, the Incite disc that was bundled inside the loving pages of my much-craved-for journalistic creation was none other than cracked! Thus stated, the crack itself is actually quite aesthetically clever, as it is shaped in an unfor-giving upper case "Y" letter pattern that branches out from the center, which coincidentally matches my question: "Why?" Probably crushed in transit on the way to the temporary holding place which is my mailbox, the force that most likely cracked my beloved Incite disc does not nearly compare to the force that is shadowing my world and crushing my perceptual accuracy as we speak.

Tommy

Vivian responds:

From time to time, U.S. Postal Service workers and machines get angry, and INCITE CDs show up mutilated. We're sorry for the inconvenience and we try to replace them where possible, but cannot service every request. If this happens to you, email subscribe@xlr8r.com and we'll try to work some magic...or just kick your mailman in the shins.

FROM ITALY WITH LOVE

I recently relocated to San Francisco from Italy to study journalism. I've been working in the (indie) music industry for many years.

I had the chance to read the last two issues of *XLR8R* and I have to tell you that it's an amazing publication. I got closer to electronica in the late '90s, thanks to the so-called IDM movement and the rise of a heartfelt scene through Morr Music releases and artists. I am now a devoted follower of many European labels like Karaoke Kalk, AI, Static Caravan, Resonant, Neo Ouija and many others.

Many European publications (like *The Wire*) are still stuck on the academic side of writing and refuse to deal with new movements with that fresh attitude that characterizes *XLR8R*.

Davide Gualandi

CORRECTIONS In Vitamin Betty's column in issue #80, we incorrectly spelled the name of Wobbly's EP. It is "Multiple Ready" (Boniato), with remixes by Blevin Blectum, Sutekh and People Like Us.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Like us? Hate us? Write us! Email letters to letters@xlr8r.com or send mail to *XLR8R* Magazine 1388 Haight Street #105 San Francisco, CA 94117. All letters printed "as is."

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Dov Charney, AA founder talking politics with George W. Bush in Times Square.

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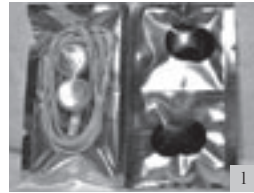
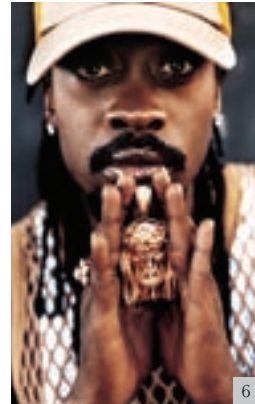
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THE WINTER BLUES



Bitter Bastard usually wastes time whining about music, but now that the stereo only plays old Smiths records and Stone Roses reissues, all is aurally well and good. Not so on the culture front. Bastard still has to go outside and be confronted with the worst pop life has to offer. Here's what old Beej has beef with this winter.

- 1. iPod Earphones** While iPods are cool, those fucking dorky looking white earpieces are exclusively for geeks. Or maybe I'm just jealous that my MP3 player only holds 32 MB.
- 2. "Swag hags"** You know, those people who will wear any promotional t-shirt, even if it's for Tequila. Also refers to harpies who are always grubbing for free clothing items at trade shows and who are prone to tearing apart gift bags for the Orbit gum samples.
- 3. The Sony/BMG Merger** So much for free market competition. As of late July, Sony BMG controls more than 22% of the global music market and is one of only four major record labels in the U.S. While the label spends the next 20 years duking it out with the other giants—Universal, WEA and EMI—we'll have only more acts like Lil' Bow Wow, Jessica Simpson and Audioslave to look forward to.
- 4. Watching DJs play CDs** Call us old-fashioned, but it's totally boring. Then again, this could be the important kick in the ass clubs need to get people on the dancefloor instead of trainspotting by the booth.
- 5. Cowboy boots** I'd like to think wearing these is an ironic commentary on the Bush administration, but all the New York hipsters wearing these don't know Iraq from their asshole. So they wear

their overpriced vintage shitkickers, and Roy Rogers turns over in his grave.

6. Beenie Man's identity crisis We hate homophobia in dancehall as much as the next punter, but Beenie Man's recent apology for his anti-gay lyrics (prompted by his performance being cancelled from the MTV Awards), was, well, gay. Trying (unsuccessfully) to convince Americans that "Bad Man Chi Chi Man" doesn't promote violence against homosexuals, then taking the apology back to try to please the hardcore Jamaican audience was lame. Beenie = weenie.

7. Tom Cruise Tom Cruise is the posterchild for Scientology's cult status. Watch *Cocktail*—see how he looks like an innocent young fawn? Now watch any recent Cruise appearance on *Oprah* and you will see a scary robot with a laugh like Satan and the cold-eyed look of the Terminator. Brrrrrrr! Creepy!

8. Toyota Prius Yes, a hybrid car is a good idea. But why did they have to make the Prius look like a shitty Dodge in the front and an ugly old-school Mitsubishi in the back? And why does the name Prius always remind us of penis? Maybe because people who drive these things are constantly popping a boner over their good gas mileage and reminding everyone else what a gas-guzzling asshole they are. Prius drivers are the new vegans.

9. Rappers retiring Does anyone believe in rappers retiring anymore, especially after Mase? It's become a totally boring publicity stunt. Fat Joe losing weight is a pretty good ploy, though.

10. "I'm Rick James, Bitch" P.S. It's only funny when Dave Chappelle says it.

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FM3
 AMBIENT NOISE ARISES FROM BEIJING'S
 INDUSTRIAL SOOT.
 WORDS: CAMERON MACDONALD IMAGE: NOPATTERN

Sometimes boredom is a divine muse—especially when, like Zhang Jian, you're playing keyboards in 10 bands to pay the bills. Jian was slumming in Beijing until he heard that some American ex-patriot wanted to form an "electronic band." "I had nothing else to do, so I came along to the practice," he later recalled, "and that was the beginning of FM3."

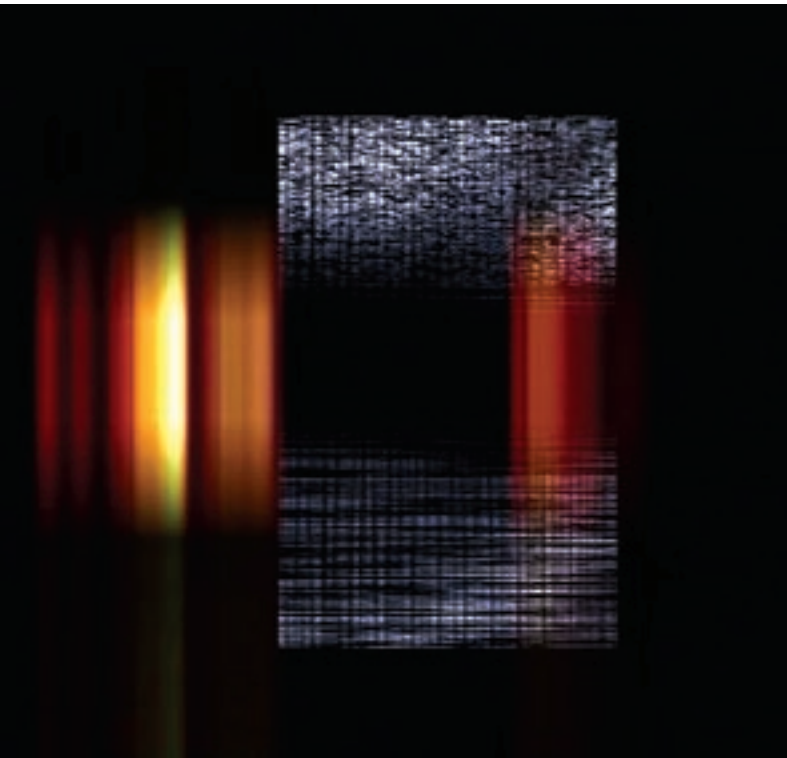
Christiaan Virant, the other half of FM3, was that American expat. He's no longer sure about why he moved to China from his native Nebraska, but he immediately felt isolated from the West upon arrival. "I didn't really come out [of] the bubble until the late '90s when I started a punk band," he recalls via email. "Nothing was really happening in the Beijing electronic scene back then...I started FM3 as a way to push things forward."

Virant and Jian, who initially undertook dub-style excursions inside a Mao-era bomb shelter, translate Beijing's industrial grime into poetic noise by digitally manipulating classical Chinese instruments. Initially, they performed live with the instruments themselves, until Virant realized they were "too limiting and looked pretentious." These days, they prefer to sit on a carpet with their laptops, tinkering with field recordings and samples. The laptop format suits their eerie sounds better, as on "Zheng," a desolate ballad that speaks of haunted abandoned factories; to create the track's drone, Virant took a Chinese string instrument track and de-tuned it to create a mourning piano-like sound.

"Zheng," along with the track "PPa," appears on Bip-Hop's *Bip-Hop Generation, Vol.7* compilation. This international debut became possible when they met *The Wire* contributor Steve Barker, who played their tape at a house party in England. It caught the ear of Robin "Scanner" Rimbaud, who later recommended FM3 to Bip-Hop. Since 1999, when the Internet helped break through the Chinese government's cultural barriers, FM3 has been receiving more and more attention. This January, they will release a live set in Amsterdam via Staalplaat and a field document of Tibetan street music on Sublime Frequencies.

Despite the fact that all musical performances must be sanctioned by the authorities, Virant mentions that underground music in Beijing mostly thrives without bureaucratic hassles. "[Asking if the government cares about us] is a bit like asking some American underground band if they have ever heard from the White House!" Jian carps. "The only thing really subversive about FM3 is that we play so quietly sometimes you can barely hear what we are doing," Virant adds. "We find this quite subversive, but if old people and kids like it, it ain't really punk rock is it?"

www.bip-hop.com



DIN DAA DAA

The new ~scape DVD *DIN AV* (~scape; \$24.98) ignores the music video paradigm in favor of six collaborations between video and audio architects like Jan Jelinek, Visomat Inc., Safety Scissors and Rechenzentrum. The results vary wildly, from the segmented screens and overlaid text of "Squirrel Attack" (images by Jörg Franzmann, sounds by Dimbiman) to the queasy synth pulse and x-ray abstraction of Rechenzentrum (shown here), a trio that creates integrated audio/visual works. Bonuses include live footage of Pole and Visomat in Berlin, interviews with the artists, plus a few video loop screensavers. Miles ahead of the predictably "trippy" melange of computer-generated animation and vintage film clips that comprise most club visuals, *DIN AV* is a challenging union of the eye and ear which reminds us of the often unfulfilled potential of both mediums. *Peter Nicholson*
www.scape-music.de

BIG SHOTS

Big Up, (Princeton Architectural Press; softcover, \$35), a scrapbook belonging to photographer **Ben Watts**, chronicles an obsession with street culture, from muscled giants with oversize boomboxes to weed-wielding reggae dons to carefully-coiffed mods on the back of (what else?) white Vespas. The book includes a smattering of portraits of hip-hop celebs (from Ludacris to DMX to Missy), but this collection's at its best when Watts pastes together Polaroid out-takes with masking tape, creating collages of pre-teen Irish boxers preparing for their first fight and documenting New York's Puerto Rican Pride parade in candy-colored detail. Originally released as a hardcover late last year, *Big Up* is now available in a more affordable softcover format, and it provides days worth of cerebral cortex stimulation, not to mention style ideas. *Tyra Bangs*
www.papress.com



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▲ (clockwise from top left) Crown City Rockers' Headnodic, Woodstock, Max MacVeety, Raashan Ahmad and Kat Ouano

CROWN CITY ROCKERS

THIS HIP-HOP ENSEMBLE SHINES FROM STEREO TO STAGE.

WORDS: JONATHAN ZWICKEL PHOTO: SCOTT ANDERSON

Blending MPC beats with human-powered drumming, jazzy organ runs with jagged turntable stabs and warm-blooded basslines with precision-tuned loops, Crown City Rockers strikes the perfect balance between unplanned and programmed. Their latest release, *Earthtones* (Basement Records), is a lesson in modern music theory, bringing hip-hop's core influences—jazz fusion, be-bop, funk, and Afrobeat—into a fresh context.

"We never wanted to be a funk band with a rapper," says Raashan Ahmad, Crown City Rockers' easy-

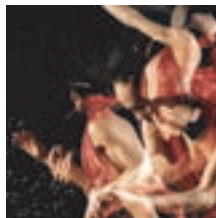
going rhymesayer. "All the instrumentalists in the band really respect the art of playing hip-hop music." Those players include Kat Ouano, the classically trained keyboardist whose breezy, soulful melodies give *Earthtones* a gorgeous gravity, and in-the-cut drummer Max MacVeety. Rounded out by bassist Headnodic and production guru Woodstock, the band has been flooring Bay Area audiences for almost five years.

Their live shows are legendary, but putting that explosive spontaneity on wax didn't happen so easily. "The studio is a different monster," Ahmad

explains. "You can't rely on the audience to give the energy back, or the usual stage tricks." Like some kind of funky A-Team, each band member brought individual expertise to the project. "I need to have the boom bap, Kat needs the jazz," muses Ahmad. "Everyone needs to be represented, and I think we did it."

Even as *Earthtones* racks up critical accolades, Crown City Rockers keeps putting miles on the tour van. They open for Brand Nubian on a string of West Coast dates this fall, then head off for a week in Japan late October. "The studio is a challenge we're trying to conquer, but we have to keep playing in the meantime," says Ahmad. And though he can't exactly put a finger on it, Ahmad has a good idea of that mysterious x-factor that marks his band as one to watch. "It's just fun. At the end of the day, you definitely have to travel and play music with your friends."

www.crowncityrockers.com



OUT NOW:
DJ RELS
THEME FOR A BROKEN SOUL

A hazy, funky collection of hip-hop inspired, futuristic instrumentals from the mind of the reclusive desert-dwelling DJ Rels. With this new album, executive produced by Madlib, Rels is opening up new doors for a hip hop label with progressive dance music that draws from both the jazzier and more electronic of the Stones Throw tradition. A project that is pensive and reflective, yet energetic and danceable at the same time.



OUT NOW:
GARY WILSON
MARY HAD BROWN HAIR

"If the offspring of Elvis Costello were hired to make some 70's funk-porn but ran into a bunch of CBGB's punks doing an impersonation of New Wave...then here you have Gary Wilson"
- **?uestlove** (Esquire, 7/04)

OUT NEXT:
STONES THROW 101
DVD & CD

Stones Throw celebrates it's 100th release with a DVD collection of all of our videos, including new ones from Madvillain, Gary Wilson, Koushik, plus other previously unseen bonus features, and a Stones Throw Mix CD by Peanut Butter Wolf.

OHNO

THE DISRUPT
CD/2LP

FEAT. PRODUCTION BY OHNO, J DILLA, MADLIB, KANKICK & GUESTS ALOE BLACC, WILDCHILD, DECLAI ME, MEDAPHOAR

STONES THROW RECORDS www.stonesthrow.com

Caroline Distribution. Available from: All City Beats (Columbus, OH), Amoeba (LA, SF, Berkley), Armand's (Philadelphia), Criminal Records (ATL), Dusty Groove (Chicago), Earwax (Brooklyn), Fat Beats (NY & LA), hiphopsite.com, Mondo Kim's (NYC), Newbury Comics (MA), Open Mind (SF), sandboxautomatic.com, thegiantpeach.com, Turntable Lab (NYC)

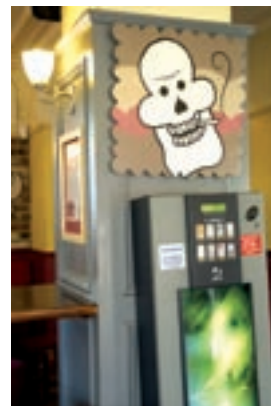
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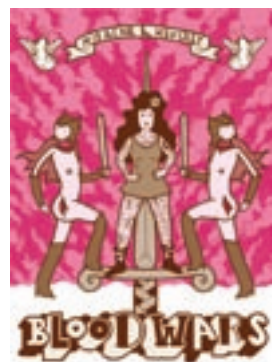
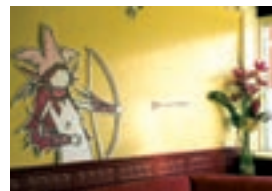
BLOOD & GUTS

“The whole night was a haze of shits ‘n’ giggles, then I woke up on a kitchen floor,” says Kev Grey of the August 28 opening of his *Blood Wars* show, a collaborative effort with fellow Northern UK graf prankster-turned-design minx Kid Acne. Limiting themselves to a palette of chocolate brown, pink and white, the pair filled Sheffield bar Dulo with foam and wood cut-outs of marauding pirates, cotton candy-colored angels and bouncing skulls, while fellow writer T.Rex played Twisted Sister’s “I Wanna Rock” on the hi-fi. “We felt that limiting ourselves to two or three colors would tie all the work together,” says Acne of the concept. **“It gives the illusion there is more work than there actually is—that’s how graf throw-ups work, too.”** Acne and Kev originally bonded over a fondness for old comics and classic graffiti writers like P.Nut 2 and Iz the Wiz, and soon found they liked to discuss “crack rocks and GG Allin over a whole chicken in Nando’s before a tippie of Hoegaarden.” This mix of humorous influences gets reflected in the show, which runs through November 28, but all is not so light-hearted. The *Blood Wars* name refers to the cutthroat techniques of the writer Cap from *Style Wars*. “If we do catch you at the wall, it’ll be like boom, boom, boom,” sneers Grey. “Even if you are shooting a movie!” *Vivian Host*

www.invisiblepies.com, www.kidacne.com, www.kevgrey.com



▲ Blood Wars at Dulo in Sheffield, UK (Cat Stevens)



FIVE STAR: KNIFEHANDCHOP

23-YEAR-OLD GABBIER GINSU PICKS HIS FAVORITE OLD-SKOOL HARDCORE RECORDS.

1. Brisk & Trixy “Eyeopener” (Slammin’ Vinyl) This is *the* happy hardcore tune! This is my number one choice because it’s the best track from 1997. That period of time is the least respected within the rave scene, and simply not cool to play right now. Having said that, I think everyone should start playing their 1997 tracks so we can finally bust out our glow-sticks again!

2. The Mover “Over Land and Sea” (PCP) I actually never was fortunate enough to hear this track played at any old parties. I only discovered it recently but it’s probably the best track by The Mover. If you don’t know the PCP label or stuff by The Mover, it’s basically tracks that sound really wimpy and pathetic at your house but fucking *huge* on a rave sound system.

3. Inferno Bros “Slaves to the Rave (Neophyte Remix)” (Rotterdam Records) I had to pick at least one song with the word “rave” in it and this is the one! One of the biggest selling hardcore records ever and you’ll understand why when you hear the awful, cheesy voice saying, “slaves to the rave,” pitched down about 12 octaves!

4. Hyperactive “Let Me Play” (Slammin’ Vinyl) Being from Toronto, this one is really close to my heart. This song owned the city back when it was released. Its cheesiness factor is through the roof but it’s aged much better than its closest rival “Shooting Star.” Both of those tracks were huge at the time and I remember being at a Hullabaloo party in 1997 on two pills and thinking, “What a wicked track! I need another E!”

5. Lenny Dee “Forgotten Moments” (LD Records) This is easily one of the best written hardcore tracks and coming from Lenny Dee, some people think it was all an accident. This one’s such a good acquisition for any male hardcore fan because even though this is a great hardcore track, it has beautiful melodies. What that means is that when you were dating that girl that liked trance or house, you could just play them this song and fool them into thinking all hardcore sounds like this—and they would agree to go to that rave you were dying to go to! Knifehandchop’s *How I Left You* is out now on Tigerbeat6. www.knifehandchop.com, www.tigerbeat6.com



OBSESSIONS: J-ZONE

Pimping ain’t easy. Just ask J-Zone. The 27-year-old rapper, producer and CEO of Old Maid Entertainment is set to release his fifth album this fall—another wacky installment of the J-Zone saga, chronicling the misadventures of “rap’s Tom Jones.” Few true hustlas live with their 80-year-old grandma, but then again, J-Zone is more revered for his sense of humor than his sense of grandeur. Though J-Zone has worked with esteemed artists Biz Markie, Danger Mouse and High and Mighty, he usually keeps close company with his crew, the Old Maid Billionaires. But when the weather in Queens, NY, turns cold, J-Zone abandons even friends and family for his one true love: basketball. *DJ Anna*

J-ZONE ON BASKETBALL

“When it comes time for NBA play-offs and March Madness, don’t even think

of attempting to get in touch with me! Basketball always gets me in a lot of trouble because when it comes to basketball season even my career comes second. Like, I refuse to tour during basketball season—I’ll do a spot date or a weekend tour, but I refuse to leave for more than a week or two.

“Five days a week, between November and March, I’m at a game, so between the hours of four and seven, don’t even call me. I go to high school games between four and seven, go home, eat dinner and then watch NBA games for the rest of the night. High school basketball is a big subculture, some of the best players in the NBA came out of that system. I eventually want to coach high school ball.”

“A Friendly Game of Basketball” 12” is out on Old Maid Entertainment/Fat Beats. www.zonesite.net



TIEFSCHWARZ

HOUSE MUSIC THAT YOU CAN SINK YOUR TIEF INTO.

WORDS: PHILIP SHERBURNE PHOTO: HOLGER HILL

Nothing sucks like discovering, mid-interview, that only a week earlier the artist on the other end of the line was mere meters away. "I was playing upstairs, in the side room," says Ali Schwarz—one half of the deep house and electro-techno duo known as Tiefschwarz—about an Output Records party held at Barcelona's Nitsa club the week before. While I was sweating it out on the main floor, my quarry was just upstairs. We may have even brushed shoulders the following day at Kompakt's epic beach party. "I was the guy in his underwear," recalls Ali of the out-of-control oceanside afterparty. Okay, so maybe the phone call is a better option after all. Just because Tiefschwarz makes some of the sleaziest house music around doesn't mean I need to see them in their skivvies.

When you're a globetrotting DJ, it helps to be part of a duo: While Ali played the Output party, his brother Basti, bushed from a spate of gigs in Europe and Australia, slept. They traded places the next night, when Ali and his tighty-whitey tan lines crashed and Basti held the reins at Gigolo's annual post-Sonar blowout at Moog.

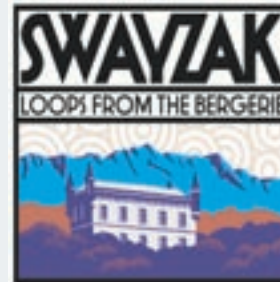
When they get together in the studio, though, there's no snoozing. Tiefschwarz (which translates as "deep black") has turned out dozens of remixes over the past few years, including a recent commission from Kelis; they're so busy, in fact, that they've had to turn down work from the likes of Felix da Housecat and Goldfrapp—dream jobs for any artist even marginally less established.

In the weeks between gigs, the two are currently working on a new album. It promises to be very different from the duo's 2001 longplayer *RAL9005*, which came out on Four Music before being picked up by Classic. *RAL9005* was a leagues-deep affair of disco and sparkling deep house, but Tiefschwarz's more recent material, like the masterful "Blow"—a tune as crystalline as its name suggests—offers a trashier sound in line with allies like Output and Gigolo.

"The sound is changing," acknowledges Ali. Berlin, where the two live, is a big influence, from the city itself ("bankrupt and quite heavy," according to Ali) to the many producers—Ewan Pearson, Richie Hawtin, Mr. Negative—who have relocated there.

"Techno slowed down and mixed up with other influences, and it's put a new feel into house music," says Ali of the new European sound. "This year at Sonar you could see this new bunch of people from Crosstown Traffic, Kompakt, Tigersushi, even Physical and Bpitch, all coming together. It's not just about electroclash any more."

www.tiefschwarz.net, www.classicmusiccompany.com

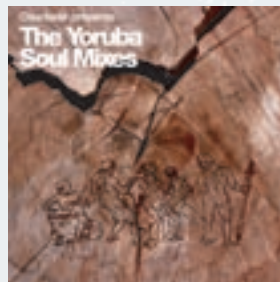


SWAYZAK
Loops From The Bergerie OUT NOW (IK7)

Featuring the hit single "Speak Easy" as featured in the recent Motorola Ad.

Look for Swayzak's upcoming live tour at the end of 2004.

Check www.k7.com/tour for updates.



OSUNLADE
The Yoruba Soul Mixes OUT NOW (Rapster/BBE)

Presents The Yoruba Soul Mixes is an overdue collection of Osunlade's best remixes, most of which were previously unavailable on CD.



DIMITRI FROM PARIS & JOEY NEGRO
Kings of Disco OUT NOW (Rapster/BBE)

Dimitri From Paris and Joey Negro team up for The Kings Of Disco, a collection of retro grooves, disco anthems, and dancefloor classics.



UNKLE
Never, Never, Land OUT NOW (Globalunderground)

The long awaited follow up to 'PSYENCE FICTION'.

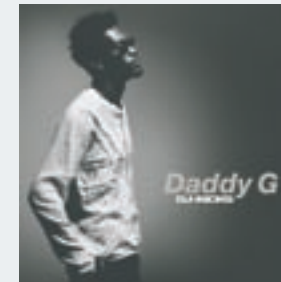
Featuring collaborations with Ian Brown, Josh Homme (Queens of the Stone Age) Brian Eno and exclusive remixes by RJD2 and Morgan Geist (Metro Area).

See UNKLE Live On Tour This Fall!



FUNKSTÖRUNG
Isolated.
Funstörung Triple Media OUT NOW (IK7)

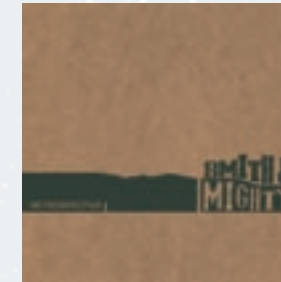
Collectible limited edition book and DVD celebrating Funkstörung's visual collaborations with world famous designers and artists.



DADDY G
DJ Kicks AVAILABLE 11.16.04 (IK7)

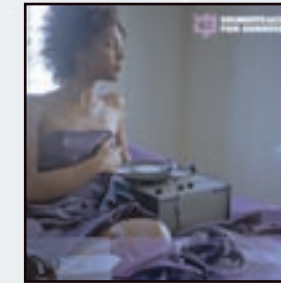
"Daddy G, of Massive Attack fame, keeps it cool and deadly with this inspired mix of downtempo, dub and reggae."

—(XLR8R)



SMITH & MIGHTY
Retrospective OUT NOW (IK7)

Retrospective, a collection of classics from the innovators of the Bristol music scene, combines elements of dub, reggae, R&B, hip-hop, and drum & bass into a seamless mix ready to rock any dance floor around the world.



GB
Soundtrack For Sunrise OUT NOW (Sound in Color)

At the young age of 20, GB, the Inglewood, CA native whose birth name is Gabriel Reyes-Whittaker, has already begun to make a name for himself. The project features guest vocals from talents like Steve Spacek, Flora Purim, and Joy Jones, while some of the other tracks feature live musicianship and guest production from the likes of Ricci Rucker and Airtro Moreira.

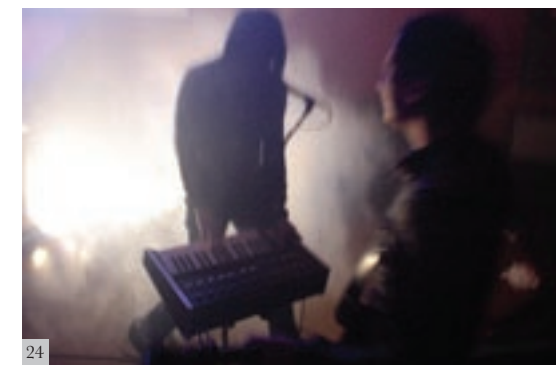
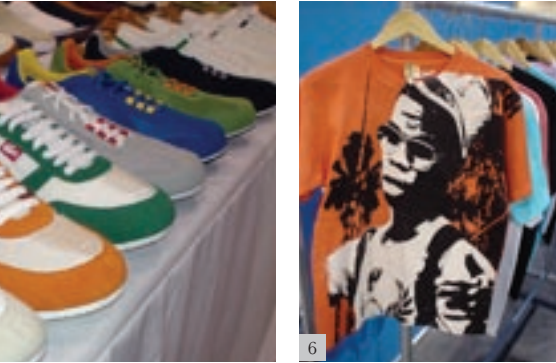


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SHOES DON'T FAIL ME NOW
 Anyone with feet would have enjoyed the August 2004 **Pool** and **MAGIC** clothing tradeshow in Las Vegas. Shoes were in abundance, as were plenty of other adornments for the body. *Andrew Smith, additional photos by Christian Santos*
www.pooltradeshow.com, www.magiconline.com

1. Josh Eustis (pictured) and Charlie Cooper of **Telefon Tel Aviv** dropped a nasty techno-electro set at the *XLR8R/Pool/ESPN Videogames/Asics/myspace.com* event on Tuesday night at OPM; 2. New kicks from **Etnies Plus**; 3. **Asics' Onitsuka Tiger** is golden; 4. **Fred Perry** debuted their own footwear line for men and women; 5. **Lacoste** sneakers were impressive; go kick a preppy! 6. T-shirts by **Lemar & Dauley**, some of the most inspired designs at Pool; 7. **Diadora** brings back their classic styles in new colorways; 8. Citizen Urban Icon figures decked out in **DC Shoes** gear; 9. **GrnAppleTree** comes with the hand-bleached, hunting-inspired, animal-friendly t-shirt; 10. **Vestal** don't fuck around with their beefy time pieces; 11. **PF Flyers** displayed the limited Justin Bua shoe, 1,000 available worldwide; 12. **OP** demonstrated that they are the kings of '80s color combos; 13. Reissue bags from **Puma** were hot and shiny.

14. English upstart **Cushe** with radical new runners; 15. Chicago's **Syndrome** is bringing back the tie-dye, although it never died for the poor folks in *XLR8R's* San Francisco office. 16. **Aceyalone** and crew made the crowd go wild at the *XLR8R/Pool/ESPN Videogames* event; 17. **iPath** debuted one of the most intricate sole designs on this planet; 18. The UK invaded heavily this season, most notably with the introduction of **Boxfresh** to our shores; 19. Jamaican-inspired boards from **Rockers**; 20. If you're ultra-hip, you've got at least one pair of **Evisu** jeans. Now go one step beyond with these ultra-bling high-tops; 21. T-shirt line **Unified** had some hot, politically-inspired designs; 22. **Reebok Classic** gets all up in you-know-who's shit; 23. **Triple Five Soul** stunned us with amazing new footwear and men's and women's fashions; 24. Output Recordings' **Dead Combo** finished off the *XLR8R* night with a Moog and mayhem.



VHS OR BETA

TAKING HOUSE MUSIC WHERE IT RARELY GOES: THE INDIE ROCK SCENE.

WORDS: AMBER DREA PHOTO: MICK ROCK

▲ (Clockwise from top left) VHS or Beta's Zeke Buck, Mark Guidry, Mark Palgy and Craig Pfunder

Composed of guitarists Craig Pfunder and Zeke Buck, guitarist-turned-bassist Mark Palgy and drummer Mark Guidry, VHS Or Beta formed in 1997 amidst the post-Slint haze of Louisville's über-intellectual indie community. Sick of "music for musicians" and playing to people who just stood there with their arms folded, the quartet

decided to write music that would make a body move.

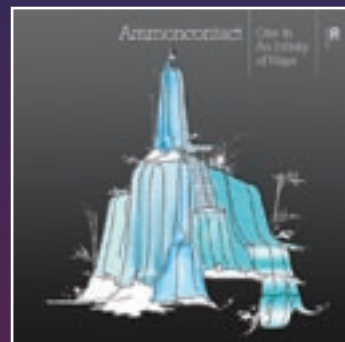
"Dancing is one part of [the reaction] we'd like to achieve from people, but it's definitely not everything," Pfunder says. "Even if they don't dance, we're not like, 'Fuck, why didn't you dance?' It's more about them [realizing] that dance music is okay and you don't have to be a raver to listen to that kind of music."

Though they've adopted a party spirit, VHS Or Beta displays meticulous musicianship. Originally an instrumental group, they've had to develop strong sonic motifs, which sometimes sprawl for nine minutes or more. Layers of riffs and melodies loaded with delay and reverb are patched through filters and textured with distortion. Pfunder and Buck's deft guitar playing, Palgy's disco basslines and Guidry's four-on-the-floor beats combine to create house music strongly steeped in rock and roll. "I think all of us have a really strong tie to bands like Sonic Youth," says Buck. "They work with shapes rather than actual notes. And we kind of approach house music in that way—we approach it as guitars would."

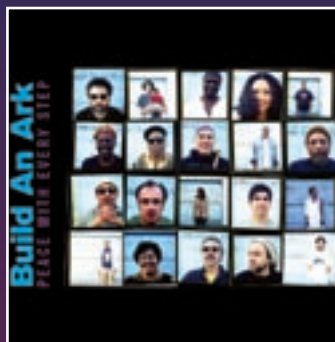
Their latest album, *Night On Fire*, differs significantly from their self-released 2001 debut *Le Funk*, a mostly instrumental effort. Six of the 10 tracks on *Night On Fire* feature pop structures and catchy vocals, provided mainly by Buck and Pfunder. The lyrics are pretty simple, mostly about the universal themes of booty shaking and lovemaking; the most political they get is on "No Cabaret," which addresses NYC's licensing laws that suppress dancing in public places.

Pfunder's nasal, faux-British vocal tone often conjures images of Robert Smith. "I went through a struggle just to find a voice that felt right with the music," Pfunder explains. "You find your character with music in many ways, just like you do in so many things [and] in life in general. It's a way to emote."

Night on Fire (Astralwerks) is out now. www.vhsorbeta.com, www.astralwerks.com



AMMON CONTACT
One In An Infinity of Ways
Ammon Contact is a hip-hop production duo that has been releasing some of the funkier sample based /live instrumentation beat hybrids of the last couple years.



BUILD AN ARK
Peace With Every Step
Build An Ark is a Los Angeles based Soul-Jazz ensemble that was formed in an effort to encourage peace and love in the world during the hysteria that came post 9-11.



CHICKS ON SPEED
99 Cents & Remixes
Chicks On Speed finally make their long awaited US return with 99 Cents, their finest album to date.



CHINNA SMITH
Dub It
Lost for almost 25 years, this dub treasure, resurrected by Wailers guitarist Chinna Smith, offers a rare glimpse of reggae's golden era. A Rockers reunion featuring Chinna Smith, Augustus Pablo, Carlton Barrett, Horsemouth Wallace, Dean Fraser, and many more.



DECLAIME
Conversations With Dudley
In a testament of hip-hop soul, Declaime (aka Dudley Perkins) opens the pages of his life on *Conversations With Dudley*. Produced by Ohno and Madlib.



MCNEAL AND NILES
Thrust
Chocolate Industries is proud to reissue this long lost progressive funk/soul classic.

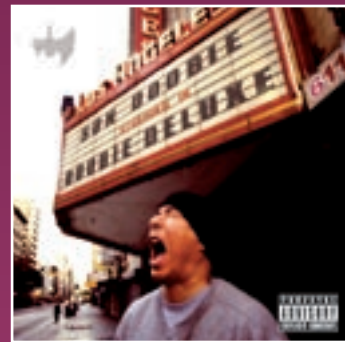


MONEY MARK
Demo? or Demolition?
Mr. Keyboard Repair is back! Mark's new EP twists rock and hip hop into brand new shapes.



PHIL THE AGONY
Aromatic: The Album
Debut Album from the Likwit Crew's own, Phil The Agony. All star collaborations with Xzibit, Talib Kweli, Raekwon, Hi-Tek, and many more.

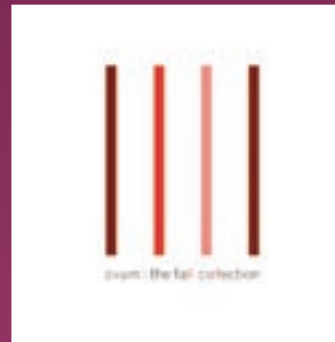
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SON DOOBIE
Doobie Deluxe
The notorious Funkdoobiest front-man makes his triumphant return to the scene with the release of his blazing sophomore solo album *Doobie Deluxe*.



SUBTLE
A New White
Subtle's debut album is a dizzying mix of funky post-rock and dissonant hip-hop that recalls everything from My Bloody Valentine to De La Soul.



OVUM: THE FALL COLLECTION
Various Artists
Celebrating 10 years of music from Josh Wink's internationally acclaimed label, featuring tracks previously unavailable on CD.

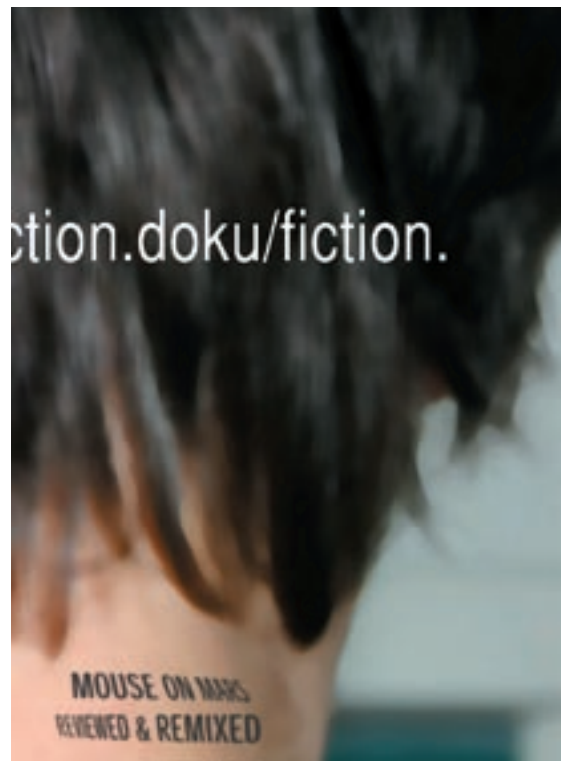


VORDUL MEGA
The Revolution of Young Havoks
Best known as 1/2 of Cannibal Ox, Vordul's smooth flow & vivid descriptions of urban life have earned him a cult status in hip-hop's underground. His debut album includes Jean Grae, C Rayz Walz, A.G. Vast and more.

ART OF NOISE

The German intellitronic collective Mouse on Mars (Jan St. Werner and Andi Toma) has a rep for producing brilliant but sometimes detached exercises in knob-tweaking and paradigm phreaking, but you wouldn't be able to tell that by reading *doku/fiction: Mouse on Mars Reviewed and Remixed* (Die Gestalten Verlag; softcover, \$35). Within these pages, scores of critics, artists and musicians engage in fan appreciation and theoretical exegeses of the duo—and their unrestrained admiration is catchier than the West Nile virus. Highlights include Dietmar Dath offering his highbrow smack-down of wannabe deconstructionists, Siegfried Zelinski delivering alchemical assessments, and Negativland visually translating their Mouse music, as well as an attached disc where Mouse on Mars musically reinterprets the book's interpretations.

For decades now, electronic music—whether fashioned by Kraftwerk, Eno, DJ Spooky, Leon Theremin or others—has provided scholars, critics and wanna-bes with a dense informational and aural matrix from which they can construct any number of fascinating and cracked analyses. Which is another way of saying that if you dig MoM's fractured techno, the writings of cultural theorist Theodor Adorno or ambitious articles on how electronic music has redefined reality, then pick up this post-modernist lovefest before it disappears into the eBay ether. *Scott Thill*
www.mouseonmars.com, www.die-gestalten.de, www.thrilljockey.com



Self-christened Captain Ahab due to “a desire to hunt and kill Moby,” this young Los Angeles native’s current schizophrenic assault on pop normalcy—as evidenced by his recent extra-strength album *The Sex is Next*—comes after years of IDM and noise chicanery. In 2002, Ahab delivered a stunningly brilliant debut release on London’s Irritant Records that bridged his keen, mean IDM machines with a pop-oriented sound deliciously steeped in dry ice and dry wit. In particular, “Put My Funk Inside You” and “God Told Me To Become An Accountant” turned Eric Idle and DMX Krew into proud conceptual forefathers. But what of all this seriously smooth but surreptitiously screwed pop music? Ahab explains: “I think my generation is able to appreciate art both ironically and seriously at the same time, effectively ridiculing and revering their topics simultaneously. I’m trying to do the same thing. I love pop music, but rather than love it ironically, **I find myself genuinely enjoying some really rather terrible music.** *The Sex is Next* is almost a serious pop album—it’s my attempt to make a good pop record without being overtly jokey.” *Brion Paul*
The Sex is Next is out now on A2 records. www.captain-ahab.com

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JUMP START THE NIGHT



JAY TRIPWIRE

VANCOUVER HOUSE STALWART FLIRTS WITH DISCO SLEAZE.

WORDS: RICHARD BROPHY PHOTO: THEO JEMISON

this style," he says, recalling a period when H-Foundation, Doc Martin and DJ Buck reigned supreme.

Unsurprisingly, the sound that had initially re-ignited the staid '90s house scene ended up sounding at best formulaic and at worst a self-parody, but Gadsby took it all in stride. "It hit a wall and it was time to move on," he shrugs. "As an artist, I was well past that sound and wasn't even playing it anymore."

These days, Gadsby has scaled down his heavy DJ and production schedule to focus on his new project, Mr. Barcode. Still only a few releases old, Barcode's work on *Gourmet*, *PR2* and *MFF* fuses robotic electro-house rhythms with grimy, low-slung basslines and trippy 303 undercurrents—an inspired collision of late '70s space disco sleaze, jacking house and angular electronics.

Jay explains that his Mr. Barcode work is truer to his musical personality than his tribal house tunes. "My dub influence was apparent before, but I'm also inspired by new wave, old disco, Kraftwerk and Italo producers like Patrick Cowley and Moroder—anything that has stood the test of time," he says. "People say electro-house is in at the moment, but this sound has roots that go way back. Anyway, acid never died for me. It's timeless—it's house music's guitar solo."

With a Mr. Barcode artist album due next year on *Gourmet*, Jay promises that his new alter ego is about to get a whole lot odder. "I created him to explore the music that people were too chicken to put out," he asserts. "Believe me, the album is going to be the weirdest yet."

Mr. Barcode's *Sounds From The Sanitarium* EP (*Gourmet Recordings*) and "Rise Of The Machines" (which appears on *MFF's Bad Acid* compilation) are out now. www.jaytripwire.com

Vancouver DJ/producer Jay Tripwire, real name Jay Gadsby, initially achieved fame in underground circles thanks to his association with the West Coast house scene. But Gadsby says his artistic canon isn't limited to the rolling, percussion-heavy grooves that characterised his releases on *Northern Lights*, *Nightshift*, *Swag*, *Household* and *Leaf*.

"People were surprised when I DJed and they didn't hear any bongos or rolling basslines," he offers. "Not all the music I was making was in that vein, but the tribal West Coast sound was shifting units and crossing over into the progressive scene. [In the late '90s] I was being asked for only this sound for remixes and productions, and some labels were rejecting my work if it wasn't in

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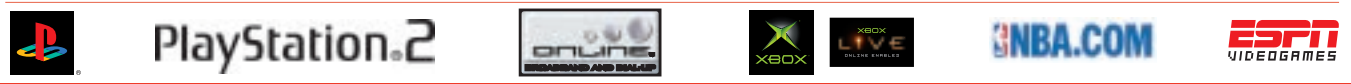
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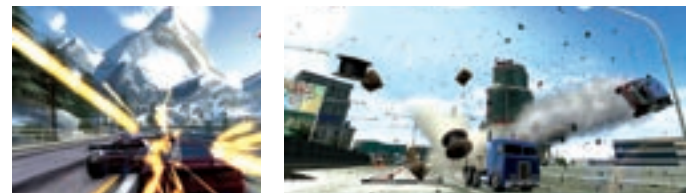
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VIDEOGAME REVIEWS



BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

With so much hoopla surrounding *Burnout 3: Takedown* (PS2/Xbox; Electronic Arts, \$49.95), I was skeptical about how good the goodness could actually be—but dammit, *Burnout 3* is fucking good! In the racing mode you fly through cities, gaining boost by driving head-on into traffic, smashing your opponents and attacking the tarmac as recklessly as possible. The “crash mode” is even better suited to wanton destruction. You’re set up with a runway into heavy traffic and the object is to destroy as many cars as possible, ending your run with the option of blowing up your own car. Multiplayer and online modes are varied and very fun, and what really makes the game enjoyable is that the controls are simple and the steering is very forgiving, making it easier to concentrate on who to demolish next. On the down side, DJ Stryker of KROQ radio is the commentator, and his annoying So Cal banter grates on the nerves almost as much as the terrible indie rock soundtrack. My advice: turn on your own tunes and wreck some shit behind the wheel. *Andrew Smith*
www.eagames.com



ESPN NHL 2K5

The folks over at ESPN Videogames have been fighting an uphill battle to gain a foothold in the sports videogames market, and they’ve been doing it right. Both low price and stunning development make *NHL 2K5* (PS2/Xbox; ESPN Videogames, \$19.99) and their recent football game, *NFL 2K5*, excellent value and excellent fun. Coming from Detroit, I was happy to bust out on the ice in charge of the Redwings—and I definitely did some damage, both with the puck and in the nutty new fighting mode. And ESPN gives super sports nerds the ultimate tool with their trademarked Live Scouting System. Now you can watch your prospective draft picks in action and run practice drills with them before you sign them up. Then you can take your team online, and start a league with a bunch of your buddies—you’ll be virtually super-stoked and in no time you’re sure to be grinding and high-sticking your way into the hockey Hall of Fame. *Andrew Smith*
www.espnvideogames.com



DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY

Def Jam Fight For NY (PS2/Xbox/Gamecube; Electronic Arts, \$49.95), the sequel to *Def Jam Vendetta*, is billed as the “ultimate hip-hop-fueled fighting video game.” True to form, its fighting aspect is almost as grotesque as its over-the-top brutality. And it’s definitely hip-hop—among the lengthy list of celebrities who appear as characters are Busta Rhymes, Fat Joe, Flava Flav and even Carmen Electra (although we’ve forgotten why she’s famous in the first place). There’s no doubting the graphics and detail are impressive. You can define your own character’s facial features, skin tone and speaking style, and then go and kick everyone’s ass. And that’s just what we need in the world today—more tired-ass ass kicking centered around urban street thuggery and hip-hop. Coming from the creator of the *Def Poetry Jam*, this game is so steeped in hip-hop clichés that I can’t help but wonder if Russell Simmons doesn’t feel a little guilty for cheapening the world he helped create. *Andrew Smith*
www.eagames.com



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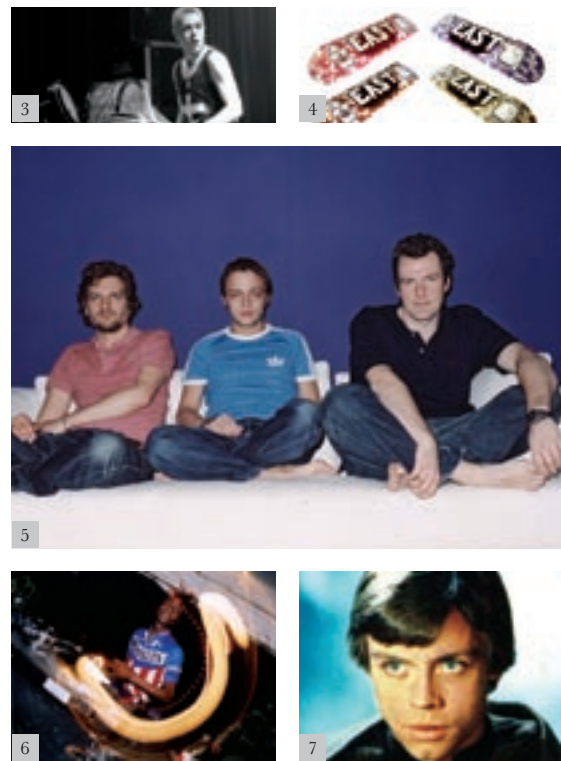
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**SPIN
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NEWS AND GOSSIP
FROM THE MUSIC
WORLD

Late this month, L.A. label Waxploitation will release a compilation whose proceeds will assist the fight against the current genocide occurring in Sudan. *Genocide in Sudan* will include tracks donated by **Dangermouse & Murs**, **Tortoise**, **Teargas & Plateglass** and **Gorillaz**, among others. **Compost** has a new night, **Compost Posse—I Like It**, held every last Friday at Munich's Registratur club. **Alex Attias** guests October 29 and on November 26, **Trüby Trio** does the damn thang. Carpark's new signing, **Signer**, will tour the US in November with **Ariel Pink** and **Greg Davis**. The insanely prolific **MF Doom** recently re-signed with Rhymesayers, with whom he will release the *MM Food* album this month. **Psychic TV** has reformed as a seven-piece band and will be touring the U.S. starting in November. Apple Corps, who own the rights to **The Beatles'** songs, are suing Apple Computers over a name dispute, following Apple's launch of the music publishing-related business iTunes. Lucasfilm is purportedly working on a TV series called *The Adventures of Luke Skywalker*, with *Clerks* director **Kevin Smith** tapped to direct an episode. This winter, Powerhouse Publishers will re-release the 1969 photo book *The Destruction of Lower Manhattan*, which documents the demolition of 60 acres of historic Lower Manhattan, including the area that would become the World Trade Center site. This fall, **Swayzak's** "Speak East" will be used to sell the Motorola V710 mobile phone. **DJ Spooky** recently teamed up with Dave Lombardo, drummer for

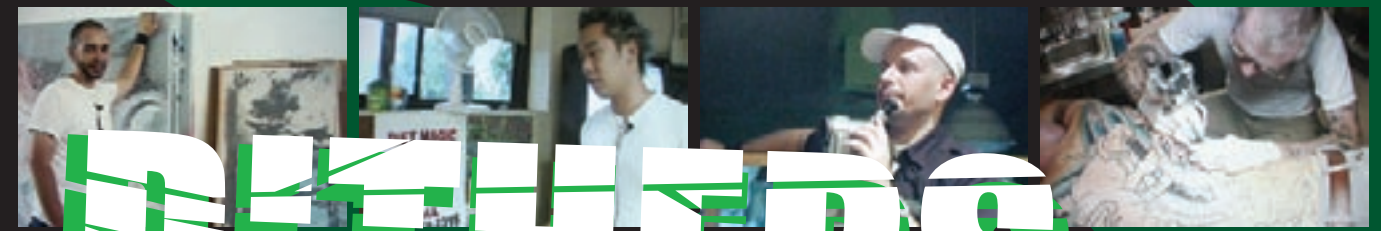
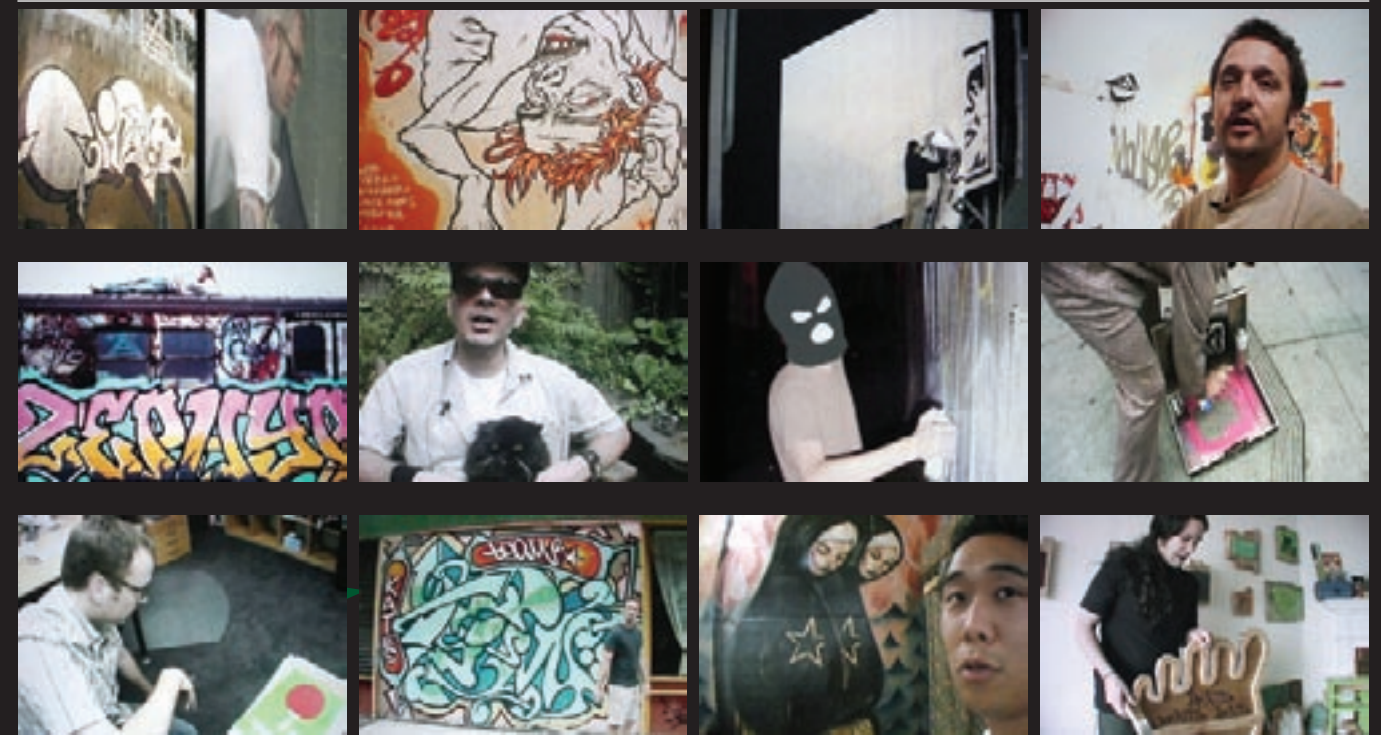


thrash metal gods **Slayer**, for a forthcoming album called *Drums of Death*, to be produced by **Meat Beat Manifesto**. **Kid Acne** and **Kev Grey** just designed some skully new skateboards for Brit company **East**. **Pokerflat** has a new label for high-quality house called Automatique. The first batch of releases—by **The Chi Chi Squad**, **Rob Acid** and **Thomas Barnett**—are out now. Purportedly, **Missy Elliott's** tour rider includes Dr. Seuss books, including *Green Eggs and Ham*, while **Usher** insists on M&M's separated by color. The **GRAMMY Awards** show will include a new category this year: "Best Electronic/Dance Album." The winner of the **Shortlist Music Prize** will be announced on November 10th at a ceremony at the Wiltern Theatre in Los Angeles. Level the playing field at www.womenoftechno.com. UK drum & bass mag *Knowledge* is publishing their first book in December, a snapshot of UK d & b culture called *All Crews*, written by **Brian Belle-Fortune**. Check www.knowledgemag.co.uk for more info. **Fresh Afrobeat**, **bossa**, **salsa** and more reside at Caracas, Argentina-based online radio www.radiomestiza.com. The *Beautiful Losers* exhibition—which features work from Thomas Campbell, Ryan McGinness and TWIST, among others—recently released an accompanying hardback book with D.A.P. Press. More info at www.artbook.com. Hip-hop and broken beat heads check the latest at www.spinemagazine.com.

1. MF Doom (Eric Coleman); 2. Ariel Pink; 3. Psychic TV's drummer; 4. Kid Acne and Kev Grey's collaboration with East; 5. Trüby Trio (Frederike Helwig); 6. Author Brian Belle-Fortune; 7. Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker

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WORLD PREMIER

Gang Starr's man of few words, DJ Premier, resurrects hip-hop's most seminal studio.

Words: Jesse Serwer
Photos: Rayon Richards

When New York City's D&D Studios closed its doors in early 2003, it marked the end of an era. An often rat-infested space amongst the sweatshops in Manhattan's stoically unrefined Garment District, D&D physically embodied New York City hip-hop for more than a decade.

Nas, the Notorious B.I.G. and Jay-Z came through D&D while making their seminal debuts *Illmatic*, *Ready to Die* and *Reasonable Doubt*, respectively, and Smif N Wessun's *Dah Shinin'* and Jeru the Damaja's *The Sun Rises In The East* were among the underground classics conceived between its walls. Until the day of its closure it remained the destination of choice for artists looking to get that gritty New York flavor into their mix: Showbiz, Diamond D, Evil Dee, Just-Ice and Craig G were D&D regulars, but more glamorous artists like Ludacris and Mariah Carey have stopped in when they wanted to get that down and dirty New York sound.

It's no coincidence that most, if not all, of the aforementioned figures were brought into the D&D fold by DJ Premier, who, ever since Gang Starr's 1992 breakthrough *Daily Operation*, had worked exclusively from D&D's "B" room.

"I just like the sound I get there, never mind them rats running around," the man born Christopher Martin once said (in a 2002 *Strength Magazine* interview) while defending his decision to not work anywhere else. And with the results he'd gotten over the past 12 years, no one ever bothered to argue.

For 15 years, Gang Starr's DJ and producer has been a soldier of blue-collar, hustling man's hip-hop. He's created instant credibility with his tailor-made beats created from clipped samples, crisp, tightly-matched hit-hats, snares and kicks and DJ scratches that cut the artist's name into the mix. While hip-hop has continued to veer from its B-boy roots towards what Premier likes to call "Tinkerbell music," his ever-expanding roster of freelance clients has continued to grow.

BECOMING THE BOSS

When he got the news that D&D was closing while Premier was in the midst of completing Gang Starr's sixth album, *The Ownerz* (Virgin, 2003), his world was effectively rocked.

"It put me in a mental freeze for a moment," the Houston native recalls, nearly two years later, in his husky Brooklyn-via-Houston drawl. "My man Headcourterz had just passed away. It was a rough little road and things were coming one after another."



After completing *The Ownerz* at nearby Avatar Studios and leaving town with Guru for a Gang Starr tour, Premier decided to buy what was left of the studio from D&D partners Doug Grama and David Lotrin, who had been forced to sell after the demise of major clients like Loud Records and Rawkus and the proliferation of home ProTools setups had effectively ground business to an all-time low.

"We had to say, 'Can we afford to do this?' because money is fucked up with everybody right now," Primo says from the newly revamped studio, which has been re-dubbed Headqcourterz after his fallen comrade.

"Stepping up [and doing this new studio] had a lot to do with Headqcourterz passing away because he was loud in a good way," the producer adds. "When he died, his moms told me to dress him, make him look hip-hop. It was a responsibility I'd never had. That made me really buckle down and say 'You know what, I got to get serious and step my game up.' Musically, I have never changed but I bug myself out because I am not a take-responsibility type of person. I was always the knucklehead having fun, not wanting to take responsibility. But I have that boss mentality now because I have to."

WORDS ARE HEARD

By the time Primo and Charles Roane, a commercial producer who goes by The Mixologist, were able to move in last winter, the studio was in the process of being demolished and most of D&D's equipment had been sold off. "As long as I had those speakers I was good," Premier says, pointing to the vintage Urei [vintage studio sound] system salvaged before it was ripped out of the old "B" room (now the "H" room; the odd-shaped "A" room has been re-dubbed "Q").

"Those things are so key; they are designed to take the beating that I put into them. If you're making hardcore music you got to hear it loud. Urei's are hard to find but when you get a batch, you save 'em. It's like a Corvette Stingray. They don't make 'em the way they used to make 'em no more. I'd rather have a Stingray now than get a new fast car."

But progress at Headqcourterz has been slow, with the studio just reaching the fully functioning level this summer. On a balmy September afternoon, however, the space is seeing a flurry of activity under the direction of Gordon "Biggest Gord" Franklin, Premier's brother and partner in Year Round Records, the label he started in 2002. Floors are being mopped, and furniture is being put in place. Premier's man Black is passed out on the couch in front of a Dave Chappelle DVD, awakening to share a joint with his friend.

Primo, wearing a t-shirt bearing the Year Round logo and the question "Do you Want Hardcore?" is juggling his usual bevy of projects, prepping his Friday night mix show on Sirius

"I am 37 years old and I still fiend for hip-hop every day."

Satellite Radio, and preparing to sit down with Ludacris to discuss beats for his new album. Foremost on the artist's mind, however, is *A Man of Few Words*, his very first producer/solo album, a much-talked about project scheduled to be released through Terror Squad and Atlantic Records that has become a sort of hip-hop version of the forever-delayed Guns N' Roses project *Chinese Democracy*.

Although Fat Joe and Terror Squad's deal through Atlantic no longer exists (he's since re-emerged on Universal), Primo's record will still see release through Atlantic. Still burning with frustration over what he perceives as a lack of proper promotion of *The Ownerz* by Virgin Records (though now on indefinite hiatus, Gang Starr has exited its deal with the label), and hostility towards major labels in general, Premier promises he will "make Atlantic very happy for waiting so long."

While he is protective of the album's details ("I don't say nothing until the 'i's' are dotted on the paperwork"), the course of conversation reveals a guest roster that includes Nas and Ghostface Killah.

PRO WITH THE TOOLS

As Premier goes to work on an *A Man of Few Words* track featuring Boy Big, a St. Louis-area singer who appeared on *The Ownerz*, one major change in his studio equipment is immediately apparent: Hip-hop's most die-hard analog purist

OUT OF THE BOX: PRIMO ON PRIMO DJ PREMIER DISSECTS SOME OF HIS MOST POPULAR PRODUCTIONS.

"Dwyck" Gang Starr featuring Nice N Smooth (1992)
"Dwyck" was the first song I did in the 'B' Room at D&D—*Daily Operation* was all in the A room—because that studio was booked that day. I was like 'I'll try this room since I'm just doing a simple little song.' It turned out to be one of my biggest records. It was fun because we weren't trying to make a hit. I was like 'Let's put it on *Daily Operation*. Nice N smooth can eat, we can eat,' but everyone was like 'Nah.' We put it on *Hard To Earn* (1994) but by that time it was too late."

"N2Gether Now" Limp Bizkit featuring Method Man (1999)
"I didn't want to do a record with Limp Bizkit—they're not my style—but Fred Durst asked if he could stop by and meet me. He came over and I told him straight up I wasn't interested. Then he said 'I got your *Crooklyn Cuts* (early 90s Tape Kingz mixtape series) tapes.' I was like, 'Damn, if you got that, then you know what we going to do. Give me five minutes.' The tape was rolling and we did the damn thing. It turned out alright."

"Giantz Ta This" NYG'z (2002)
"You got to know how to play around with things. I always wanted to flip 'Seven Minutes of Funk' by The Whole Darn Family because it's a dope record, but also because it's so sampled and I've loved the way everybody's done it. EPMD 'It's My Thing' was dope, and I loved 'Ain't No Nigga' by Foxy and Jay-Z. I wanted to do the same thing I did with the New Birth record from 'Player's Anthem' by Junior M.A.F.I.A. I flipped that one on Jeru's 'Ya Playin' Yaself.' It sounded ghetto, and I wanted to do it again."





"I was always the knucklehead having fun... But I have that boss mentality now because I have to."

is working an entirely digital setup with ProTools.

"We still don't have a tape machine so in the meantime, I have been going straight digital," Premier says, adding that, despite his recent baptism into the world of digital recording, a tape machine is on the way.

"This is all brand new to me. I am used to coming in and threading the reel. I was having my little tantrums [with ProTools] for a week or two where I would get mad and go home. I finally stuck it out and just said 'I am going to stay here one day and learn.'"

To anchor his jump to digital recording, he bought Control/24, an integrated front-end console by Digidesign and Focusrite that adjusts manually while altering levels digitally.

"It's dope because it is designed to act like it is analog," he explains. "Everything you do, you can do the old-fashioned way. That way I don't feel like you took away my toy. I got my toy, it's just an updated version."

Having conquered his digital hang-ups, Primo seems primed for a new era of productivity. He's in discussions with Nas about producing his entire next album, and when the next Year Round release, a full-length debut by NYG'z, *Pros and Cons*, drops sometime next year, it will be production entirely by Premier.

STAY IN THE CUT

A day after our interview, as Premier headed to Germany for a DJ tour, a three-judge panel ruled in federal appeals court that rap artists would now have to pay for unrecognizable samples used in their songs, superceding a lower-court ruling that it is legal to use notes if the sample isn't identifiable.

Almost immediately, hip-hop pundits speculated that no one would be affected more than Premier, who has made a career out of creating new songs by chopping obscure samples into unrecognizably short bits. While Premier has yet to weigh in on the subject, it is doubtful the ruling will inhibit his beatmaking.

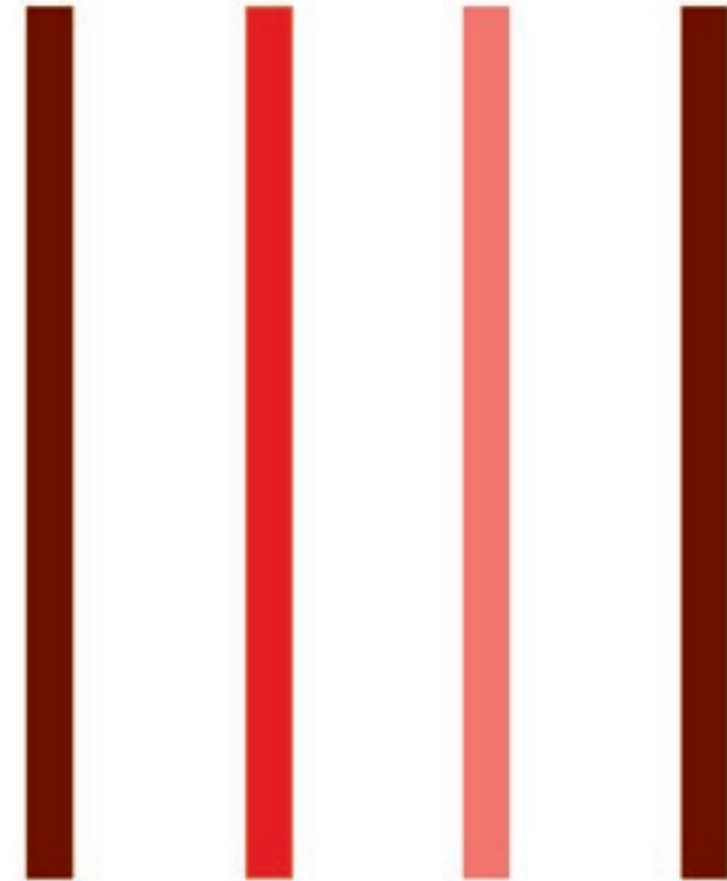
Back at Headqcourterz, he declares, "I am 37 years old and I still fiend for hip-hop every day. You got to be a student of the culture to know how to do it right: hip-hop is experimentation. You're on your turntables, scratching, and your mother calls out and the record goes rr-rrr-rrr (*simulates scratching sound*). That is what happened: Grand Wizard Theodore stopped to hear what his mom was saying."

A Man of Few Words will be out in the first quarter of 2005 through Terror Squad/Atlantic Records. "DJ Premier Presents: Live from Headqcourterz" airs every Friday night from 8-10 p.m. on Sirius Satellite Radio's "Wax" signal, 42. For information on Year-Round Records, visit www.yearroundrecords.com.

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SOUL LOGIC

California-bred John Tejada visits the spirit of old Detroit—but don't tell him that.

Words: Anna Balkrishna
Photos: Zen Sekizawa

Detroit techno is one of those things that people like to talk about but nobody seems to listen to anymore. Drop a name like Derrick May or Stacey Pullen, and a knowing nod invariably follows, a reverential gaze backward towards Detroit as that forgotten Avalon from whence “real” techno sprung. Though Detroit is a convenient signpost on the road of electronic nostalgia, we sometimes forget what the name really stands for: soul.

“I’m drawn to melodic elements in music because that’s just what I connect with.”

It’s ironic, then, that the producer who channels Detroit soul better than anybody has never lived there. For the past 14 years, John Tejada has been steadily developing his minimal, gorgeous brand of techno for such staple labels as A13, R&S and 7th City, as well as on his own imprint of eight years, Palette Recordings. But unlike peers Matthew Dear or Recluse, Tejada has never done time in Motor City. The Vienna-born producer operates from a quiet neighborhood in Los Angeles, a town not particularly known for its sensitive side. Somehow, though, lush instrumental tracks like “Memento” and “6 Hits of Sunshine” sound like personal love letters written to the Belleville Three.

Tejada claims his penchant for melody goes back to an upbringing saturated with musical influence. Sprung from a composer father and a soprano mother, he spent his early childhood shuttled around Europe to hear mom’s opera performances. The piano lessons and classic music were received as grudgingly as can be expected from an eight-year-old, but Tejada concedes that a subconscious proclivity remained. Not long after relocating to California, he discovered techno through an unlikely source: his local hip-hop radio station. “I remember it was around 1985, we had this radio station out here called KDAY that played a lot of hip-hop, and there was this electronic side of it that everybody refers to as “electro” now. I was hearing all that “Planet Rock” stuff, and sometimes they’d sneak Kraftwerk, early Model 500, even Art of Noise into the mix shows. I was only 10 and this music was totally freaking me out. Anything futuristic-sounding would get me excited. At one time, it was all hip-hop to me!” he laughs.

Hip-hop also led Tejada to producing. DJing in the LA scene grew predictably limiting, so he bought his first sampler at age 16

from his friend DJ Numark, now of Jurassic 5 fame. (About Numark, Tejada fondly recalls: “We were in these two different crews that would have DJ battles with each other; they totally hated each other!”) The goal was to make hip-hop beats, but his taste took a turn when he met longtime music partner Arian Leviste, who had dropped by a fellow producer’s house to play some keyboards. A conversation about Detroit techno and Chicago acid house proved an epiphany, launching Tejada on a career that has so far spawned 10 albums, untold crates of singles and EPs and forays into everything from techno to deep house to drum & bass.

Tejada’s latest venture is a full-length for LA outfit Plug Research. The album’s title, *Logic Memory Center*, is a fanboy’s nod to the red-lit room where HAL the computer went berserk in *2001*. It’s a good name—like Kubrick’s classic, the album conjures a sense of both past and future. Tracks such as “Possessive Patterns” recall whispers of classic Detroit’s forefathers, as delicate, ethereal synths swell and retreat around the jogging beats. But it also makes clear that Tejada is looking forward; more surgical than his past work, the album reflects the micro-glitch aesthetic currently putting Detroit (along with Cologne and Montreal, to be fair) back on the map for the umpteenth time. Sound snippets burble and stutter into tightly pressed structures, building unexpected pockets of funk and electro-emotion from seemingly sparse material.

Tejada has called *Logic Memory Center* his “computer album”—it was created all digitally, sans hardware—and you can hear this in the precision of his editing. According to him, the devil is in the details: “I worked with each sound a lot more than I would have in the past. A lot of the stuff I’d done before was really about layering melodies, which I



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enjoy—but that’s not what I wanted to do here. This time I wanted to create the feeling of melodies, but not actually use them. I wanted to focus on sound design, so that it would sound melodic but a lot of the time there isn’t a note actually being played.”

For those who miss the melodies, September saw the release of *Our Lives on Wednesdays*, his second album with classical guitarist Takeshi Nishimoto as I’m Not A Gun. Ever versatile, this time Tejada relegates the electronics to a supporting role, programming delicate bleeps and effects only so far as they enhance Nishimoto’s golden, gauzy guitar and his own live drumming. I’m Not A Gun owes as much to post-rock and instrumental jazz traditions as electronic, he admits, calling the project evidence of his “split personality.”

But back to Detroit. With talk of Tejada’s stylistic shapeshifting comes the suspicion that the label may be applied a bit too easily after all. In fact, Detroit has come to represent an idea that music journalists have a hard time quantifying: that techno can be beautiful and musical without losing its edge. Tejada is proof of this, a maker of music in a genre where musicality can be in short supply, and Detroit, it seems, is less a place than a state of mind. “Lots of the early Detroit stuff was melodic, which drew me towards it,” Tejada says. “But I’m not from Detroit. I’m drawn to melodic elements in music because that’s just what I connect with. It’s just what comes out.”

Logic Memory Center (Plug Research) and *Our Lives on Wednesdays* (City Centre Offices) are out now.
www.plugresearch.com, www.city-centre-office.de

JOHN TEJADA'S TOP 5 MOMENTS IN GEAR HISTORY

MY FIRST SAMPLER, 1990
This was an Ensoniq EPS bought from DJ Numark. This was such an amazing thing to have at the time. I could finally put music together!

MY FIRST MAC, 1993
A Performa 405 running a super early version of Cubase. This was my introduction to MIDI arrangement in the computer and changed my world forever. It made it so much easier to do all sorts of things that took forever on older hardware sequencers.

MY FIRST ANALOG SYNTH, 1992
A Roland Juno 60 with MIDI. It wasn’t the greatest thing, but it was one of the cheapest analogs that you could find. We all wanted analog synths! They sounded cool and had loads of sliders to play with.

MY FIRST GUITAR, 1991
This was a Fender Strat, which I bought with money won at a DJ battle. (It was stolen later!)

MY CURRENT APPLE G5 AND ALL THE SOFTWARE INSIDE IT, 2004
On the last album [*Logic Memory Center*], I used Reaktor to make most of the samples and sounds, plus all the plug-ins in Logic. Linplug RM4 was my drum sampler of choice; it has a really cool sampler and analog-style drum synthesis. Fourteen years later it’s amazing how things have changed!

Check out John Tejada’s other releases on Palette Recordings: www.paletterecordings.com.

RIDDIM MASTERS

Young dancehall hitmakers Scatta, Blaxxx and Vendetta lead Jamaican music into the future.

DON DADA

"Dancehall is the newest craze in music; everybody's listening to dancehall now, so dancehall is heading straight across the world. Dancehall music is just exciting. It's a whole different vibe and it's not tied to any other music—it's just there by itself." So says Donovan "Vendetta" Bennett, and he should know. The 25-year-old producer, better known as Don Corleon, has ruled the Jamaican charts for the past five years with a series of unstoppable hits. He is one of a handful of ambitious and creative individuals that have brought dancehall to its present dominant state.

It's no exaggeration to say that dancehall changes by the minute. While the style gains an increasing international audience, down in Jamaica, where the music is made, the dancehall scene seems almost as volatile as the unstable society that created it: New dances are constantly emerging, as the predominant style often shifts; every week sees the issue of a new rhythm and stars dwindle as rapidly as they are born. It takes a great deal of determination to succeed in such a capricious arena, as well as a fair amount of luck; more often than not, it is the dynamic partnerships that spring up between individuals that draw the greatest results. It's all basically down to creative production forces, most of which operate out of small, but well-equipped, home studios. Each producer strives for that hit rhythm that will ram the dancehalls and keep a notoriously fickle audience satisfied.

As with gangsta rap, most dancehall is based on hardcore beats and explicit tales of ghetto living, yet Corleon turns out to be a middle class kid, raised in the tranquility of the countryside. His involvement with sound systems gradually led to production. "When I was 13, I started up a sound called Studio 2," he explains. "In 1997 I went to Miami to study practical

electronics; when I came back in 2000, one of my cousins said he wanted to start a sound system again, so we start again and called it Vendetta. Then I started doing remixes at my house with a 450 megahertz Dell, using Cool Edit."

Opening a dubplate studio was a natural next step, which eventually led to official productions. "All I had in there was a MacKay mixer and a Roland 1880, recording dubplates for Tony Matterhorn, Stone Love, Deejay Khalid and Bobby Konders," says Corleon. "Bounty Killer and Elephant Man hang out there, and I had a laptop and a hard disc recorder, so I used to go up in the hills and check Sizzla for dubplates. My friend Baby G, King Jammy's son, had a rhythm named the 'Mexican' and I voiced Sizzla on it, and produced the song 'Come On,' a big song in Jamaica. Then Sizzla said 'I'm going to give you an album.'"

In addition to scoring a major success with Sizzla's track "Rise To The Occasion," Corleon hit Billboard's Top 100 with Elephant Man's "Pon The River"; Vybz Kartel achieved his first big hit on Don's Mad Ants rhythm with the song "New Millennium," while the Good To Go rhythm earned Corleon Hot 102 FM Jamaica's Producer of the Year and Rhythm of the Year awards in 2003. Don says his work ultimately stands out because his sound is clean, well-produced and different. "It all depends on what I'm playing around with," he insists, "because I listen to everything: alternative, jazz, soul, r&b, rap, Asian music, Spanish music."

X-AMOUNT 'A TALENT

Daniel "Blaxxx" Lewis, a multi-talented musician and producer in his own right, was a big part of Corleon's success; another uptown youth that grew up in the company of Sean Paul, Blaxxx has known Corleon since childhood. A classically trained musi-

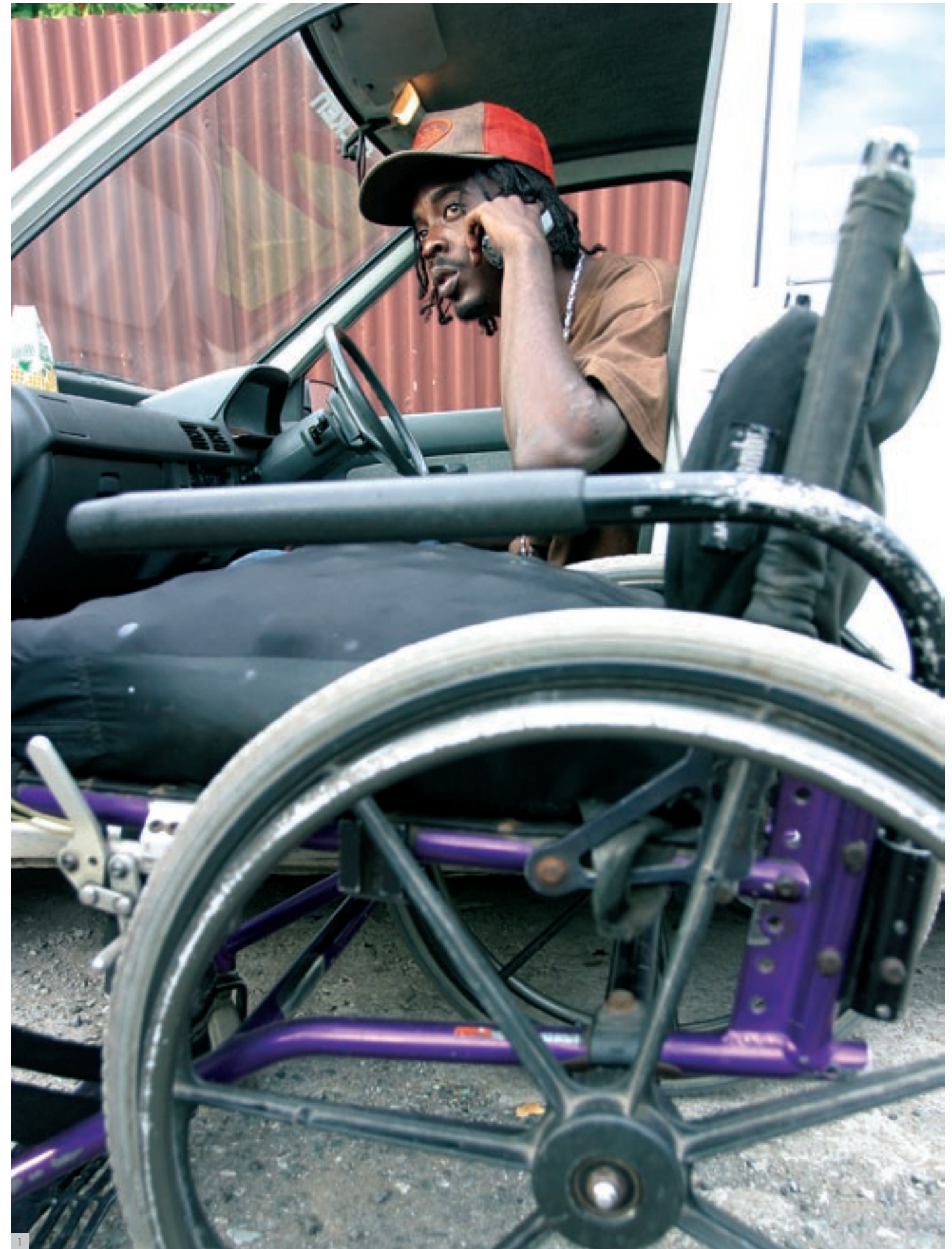
cian, Blaxxx is proficient on piano, violin and drums; in fact, he was due to further his classical training when a tragic accident pointed him elsewhere. "I got a scholarship to play drums in Palm Beach at Atlantic College," he explains, "but I had a car accident that put me in a wheelchair in 1997. I can't use my feet to play drums so I didn't take up the scholarship."

Blaxxx made some hip-hop recordings before Corleon recruited his talent. "I used to hang with Red Rat and his brother," Blaxxx recalls. "They are the ones who influenced me to start recording, but I was doing hip-hop. I always liked hip-hop, like Nas and Biggie, so I did a hip-hop album in a group called Keystone, got together most of the tracks and mixed down some of them, but hip-hop doesn't sell in Jamaica. When I hooked up with Don, I started to reach into dancehall and that's when I built my first rhythm, the Egyptian; Don had a drum pattern with a sample in it, I just played some keyboards, finish the drum pattern."

On Egyptian, Kartel reached number three in Jamaica with the X-rated "Sweet To The Belly"; Corleon says Blaxxx's involvement made all the difference. "The combination is just awesome, as Blaxxx is a brilliant musician; likewise me. The combination is murder and we're doing it from the heart, for the fun of it."

More recently, Blaxxx teamed up with deejay Buccaneer for the "Blackout" rhythm, on which Sizzla's vengeful "Wrath" was particularly popular. He also played on Anthony B's *Untouchable* album, which looks like it's going to be huge. Presently setting up his own studio, the future looks busy for Blaxxx. "I'm trying to crossover," he explains, "so I'm trying to build some hip-hop dancehall tracks, some r&b dancehall tracks, jazz-dancehall... everything dancehall."

Words: David Katz
Photos: Marlon Ajamu Myrie



"We really need to rise above casting judgment on people in the songs."



FROM MC TO PRODUCER

Another of today's most prominent producers is Cordell "Scatta" Burrell, the man behind the tremendously successful Martial Arts and Coolie Dance rhythms. Scatta says family hardship and a lack of education meant music was his only opportunity. "I don't think it goes for everybody," he insists, "but I can honestly say I didn't see any other way out."

After schoolmate Buju Banton became a star, Scatta tried to make it as a deejay at a studio called Celestial Sounds, but his failure to master the deejay form ultimately led him to production. "Steven Ventura run the studio but I realized he wasn't really feeling my energy, because, I must admit I, didn't really have the voice. Him have a big, pretty board inna the studio, a Amek Hendrix; he was one of the first man to have one of them digital boards inna Jamaica, with the Neve EQs, so I saw the board and I was like 'Yo, you need to try and learn this thing.' So I just go there every day and watch him, even if me never have lunch money or bus fare.

"[He] started to let me sit around the board and do certain stuff; at the time I was the only one showing interest in being an engineer. Then he started to hold engineering classes and he allowed me to take the class for free; I didn't do so well with the theory of it, but the hands-on thing, I had it down."

Scatta got his start working with conscious deejay Norris Man and dancehall diva Ce'cile as well as singer/producer Iley Dread (Kings of Kings). Scatta gave Ce'cile a hand with her hit "Changez," which Iley Dread released on Kings of Kings to considerable success. From there Scatta began recording artists on rhythms built by his friend Craig "Leftside" Parks, such as Chineé Gal and Double Jeopardy, which helped establish his name in the production sphere. Then, in 2002, Scatta and Iley hit the big-time with the Martial Arts rhythm, named in honor of Sizzla's hit "Karate."

After the success of Martial Arts, Scatta started building his own rhythms. "I used a MPC-2000 and a Triton keyboard; in terms of computer programs, I didn't really like them. I like the hands-on thing; in everything that I do, I don't forget the older school."

Some of Scatta's biggest hits have been "clashing" tunes, in which opposing deejays diss their rivals on

disc—Beenie Man and Bounty Killer pointed barbs at each other on one rhythm, Vybz Kartel and Assassin on another. And although Scatta agrees that such songs are not necessarily constructive, he sees them as an inevitable component of dancehall. "There's two sides to the business and one supports the other," he explains. "Bounty Killer, Beenie Man, Mad Cobra and Ninjaman can't all be Sean Paul. Them grow up inna certain climate, have experiences and so forth, and music is life; them deejay what them feel people want to hear and it's a part of expressing yourself. And it's better than taking up a gun and pointing it in a man's face."

RIDDIMS GO FORWARD

As dancehall grows in popularity, it is clearly undergoing dramatic changes. A contentious aspect has been extreme lyrics that revel in violent homophobia and misogyny, but after international campaigns resulted in the cancellation of high-profile concerts overseas, most performers and producers feel a new era is at hand. "We really need to rise above casting judgment on people in the songs," Scatta explains, "and if you want to reach somewhere, it's best to just do the music that's going to appeal to who you want to sell it to. When you hear about Sean Paul selling triple platinum, it's people from even Afghanistan picking up him CDs and buying it."

While grappling with such issues, each producer is also struggling to retain the upper hand over his rivals. "If I compared my rhythm to a next man's rhythm, I would just try to be on top," says Blaxxx, "so in a competition thing, I just have to try to be on top of all of them."

"From you listen a Don Corleon rhythm, you know you're going to say, 'Yeah, this is just wicked,'" Corleon counters. "I'm dropping a one-drop rhythm right now—electronic, but you're going to think it's live. It's mashing up Jamaica."

Despite the ongoing rivalry, each producer is dedicated to moving Jamaican music forward and aiding its broader exposure. "The same way hip-hop moved to the forefront of the industry when people start to understand hip-hop culture," Scatta reasons, "so people need to understand dancehall culture. For it to happen, we need to get ourselves heard, represent ourselves to the fullest. We need to get the dancehall field into the big league on an international level, because it works. The same way someone can be in a club and can move to a hip-hop beat, they can move to a dancehall beat."

Check out riddims by Scatta, Blaxxx and Don Corleon at www.greensleeves.net and www.vprerecords.com.



"In everything that I do, I don't forget the older school."

1. Daniel "Blaxxx" Lewis
2. Donovan "Vendetta" Bennett
a.k.a. Don Corleon
3. Cordell "Scatta" Burrell



FIXIN' IT

Broken beat goes global as Mark de Clive-Lowe keeps progressing.

Words: Jonathan Zwickel
Photo: Mari Horiuchi

It's not easy to innovate within a set of innovators. Ten years ago, the dons of the broken beat scene—IG Culture, Phil Asher, Dego McFarlane—defined a brand new aesthetic with pure forward thinking and shameless rule bending. These guys took a fresh approach to archetypal styles by cracking their core components and spreading slick, sweeping melodies over jagged, non-sequiturs.

It was all counterintuitive to the rigid rhythms of typical dance music, and their playful iconoclasm spoke to heads well beyond the usual electronic sphere. While jazz, dub, Afrobeat, funk and drum & bass were all getting wrecked, players from around the world gravitated to West London's rich creative community. Brilliant collaborations spun off furiously, like sparks from a flame.

Within that collective sense of fearless experimentation, globetrotting keyboardist/producer Mark de Clive-Lowe patiently perfected his own soulful broken beat mathematics. The overachieving child of a Kiwi father and Japanese mother—raised in Auckland, schooled in Boston and Tokyo, living in London—de Clive-Lowe has grown into a major force behind broken beat's continued progression.

"When I first came over and came across it and met Phil and IG and Dego, they were making a form of music that [I had] imagined but never heard," he says over the phone from his northwest London flat. "They were pulling together all the key influences, the history of black music, in a sound that is progressive, without being nostalgic or condescending."

As we talk, a soundtrack to our conversation kicks up in the background, coming from de Clive-Lowe's end. "I'm at home in the studio," he explains, "and Orin from Bugz is sitting at the MPC knocking out a beat." Of course—just like Harlem's tight-knit jazz family in the 1940s or

the incestuous New Orleans Mardi Gras funk mob—in West London everyone gets around.

An immense talent—trained in piano since age four—De Clive-Lowe's initial London encounter was a turning point in his artistic development. "My career as a musician was based on being this acoustic jazz artist, and then for a laugh every now and then I'd do Afro-funk beats or gigs with DJs. I was at the point where I was having more fun doing that, and I was kind of over the intellectual seriousness of acoustic jazz. It was a circuitous thing, good timing, to come over to London and come across that whole scene. It kinda woke me up."

His awakening began in 1998 with a yearlong "musical pilgrimage" around the world, which included some trying times in the UK. "So my first month in London, I was crashing on a friend's couch, and this was down in southeast London in the middle of nowhere, in winter. It was so bleak, like 'get me the fuck out of here!' At the end of the month I caught up with (saxophonist) Nathan Haines, who's another Auckland, and he had met Phil and all the boys.

"It was funny because I was going on to New York like a week or two later, and we found a studio and made loads of tracks right up to the time I was supposed to go to the airport. I remember being in the studio, like, 'Call the airport, get the flight changed,' whatever. But I was in New York suddenly, which was where I always wanted to go, but I'd just left somewhere that I never knew I'd find."

Inspired, he returned home (with a stop in Japan to pick up an MPC) only to trade the balmy shores of New Zealand for the clammy cobblestones of London in early 2000.

Since then de Clive-Lowe has been busy shaping the new jazz standard, adding his chameleon-like keys to countless tracks with the entire West London rogue's gallery and other bleeding-edge producers including Spinna and Joe Clausell. Last year he launched Antipodean Records, a New Zealand label that he hopes will introduce English ears to Kiwi cohorts like singer Cherie Mathieson and DJ Chris Cox. "It's a cultural exchange program, basically," he says.

The world will get a chance to hear his particular brand of funk this winter when he tours with the FreeSoul Sessions, a live all-improv band with de Clive-Lowe on Rhodes and MPC, Kaidi Tatham of Bugz in the Attic on percussion and keys, and Julie Dexter on vocals. Also on deck is his debut full-length, *Tide's Arising*, featuring dancefloor diva Bembe Segue and former Roots MC Capital A, dropping early next year. Expect a vibrant, worldly diversity bound by an impeccably warm vibe.

"This community has grown out of a love of Afrobeat, jazz fusion, Latin music, all sorts of shit," he says. "Tempo is just one color, rhythmic phase is just one color. If you paint your picture in all one color, so be it. But in our idiom we try to think a little more creatively."

Tide's Arising is out now on Antipodean Records. www.markdeclive.net

"They were making a form of music that I had imagined but never heard."

NORTHWEST ALLIANCE

Watts MC Libretto heads to Portland and builds a hip-hop empire with the Misfit Massive.

Words: Julianne Shepherd
Photos: Shayla Hason

A part from a few groups who got vacuumed up and spat out by the industry, Portland, Oregon, has never been nationally renowned for its hip-hop. In the late '90s, hip-hop /funk band Five Fingers of Funk gained some regional and national notoriety, and rap entrepreneur Cool Nutz was signed to, then dropped from, Universal Records. But for the most part, the city's hip-hop music has been self-contained. One explanation is that the town's never produced a wholly distinct sound to push it past the "one or two groups" phase into a regionally identified force—but partly, this is because of Portland itself.

For all its cheap rent and clean air and bike lanes, its progressive politics are still marred by racism. Like most American cities, it's intensely segregated, with the North and Northeast quadrants housing most of the city's black population—a holdover from redlining in the late 1940s, where banks and mortgage insurance programs designated certain neighborhoods as at-risk based on their racial make-up. In its most dire moments, recent shootings of unarmed black motorists—Kendra James, James Jahar Perez—by police officers have traumatized the city.

And, like most places, bureaucracy's treatment of hip-hop has been reluctant at best, intolerant and racist at worst. According to a Portland weekly *Willamette Week*, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, which regulates all liquor sales and distribution in the state, recently advised a bar to pull Hennessey off its shelves to curb gang-related violence.

Libretto writes his rhymes from Portland but, like many of the city's residents, he is originally from California. After growing up in the Gordon Downs projects of Watts, his father moved his family up the coast in 1995, for the promise of Portland's bucolic (and safer) vistas. At first, Libretto wasn't happy about it—for one, they moved to the sleepy quadrant of Southeast Portland, which is something like moving from Beirut to Saskatoon. Eventually, though, he discovered a place to kick it: Jump Jump Records, a haven for soul and funk and R&B and rap on the Northside.

More pertinently, at Jump Jump, he discovered Jumbo the Garbage Man. Jumbo was working at the record shop, perfecting his lyrics and beats with the rest of his crew, the Misfit Massive, which includes producer/vocalist Dubb-Flexx (a.k.a. Wolverine), emcees Sly da Brown Hornet and Vursatyl

and DJ Shines. Jumbo was also in a group called Lifesavas with Shines and Vurs; he liked Libretto's clear rap style—which resides somewhere between Nas and Rakim—and asked him to join Misfit Massive.

Fast-forward to 2004: Lifesavas' excellent *Spirit in Stone*, released on Quannum Projects, has enabled them to tour the world. And with a slew of forthcoming mixtapes (available on superhappywax.com) and the October release of Libretto's *Illoet* (Dim Mak), the supremely talented Jumbo will have defined a sound for the city—his buoyant, animated beats nab soul samples and stand on their own as songs. Misfit Massive's clean club swing and mindful lyricism, sometimes incorporating jazz and R&B vocals (from Vurs and Dubb), puts a firm identity on a place where hip-hop is still in zygote phase.

"We write songs and rap and we got our own culture," explains Libretto. "And [Misfit Massive] trying to come in like Wu-Tang. You can't come to our restaurant and say, 'I don't eat that.' You're gonna eat something. We chefs, and the studio is the kitchen and we be whippin' up a fat 18-course meal for y'all. We're all trying to do

"We chefs, and the studio is the kitchen and we be whippin' up a fat 18-course meal for y'all."



our thing as a crew. I'm just thankful. God is being real gracious in all of our lives."

From an industry standpoint, Libretto is encouraged by the success of Kanye West, which he sees as a commercial entry point for emcees who don't traffic in club hits and gun anthems. "That's America, you gotta capitalize. It's not about who's nice, it's about who's gonna get that dough. All they wanna do is keep people ignorant, keep people not voting, keep people sitting in the ghetto. You got Hispanics, blacks, whites—and we the only people that ain't made it out. That's some cold shit when you think about it. If you keep people ignorant, you got 'em," he says.

"Everything I say, I account for. Words are very powerful, and that's why I try to do positive music; I mean, I grew up rough, but I can only talk about that so much. But [with *Illoet*], I had to get it out of me. It's strictly on some ghetto stuff; it's black. That's me, and a lot of those songs I was going through stuff; my pops had just passed, you

know, and it's my first album so I ain't trying to make a mourning album. But everything I write is real personal."

"Barbershop," off *Illoet*, features the entirety of Misfit Massive, and leads into "Show Me Love"'s harmonies, an homage to Stylistics, Temptations, Marvin Gaye—the music of the civil rights movement, of which Libretto's parents were involved. It also evokes thoughts of Reggie's, Sly da Brown Hornet's barbershop on Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. But for all its representation of Portland as place, Libretto doesn't forget his roots in Watts, another West Coast city whose rap music has been self-contained. The chorus on the spongy club bouncer "Alma Mater" goes, "We got it major/can Watts get some paper?"

Libretto calls Watts a still-untold story. "I just wanna celebrate it; I wanna let them know that this is the beginning and I'm one emcee from Watts that just happened to make it out. It's a whole lost land in LA, and it's a lotta emcees that's gonna get they due. I'm only one. Watts is the last borough, in NY or LA, that ain't been heard of [musically]. You heard about Long Beach, you heard about Compton, you heard about South Central, but it's on the east side. It's a slum of LA; a lot of people in those projects have been there for generations, you know. I'm just chippin' at [the story]."

Illoet is out October 12 on Dim Mak. www.dimmak.com

"Words are very powerful, and that's why I try to do positive music."



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BACK IN THE LOOP

From techhouse to a French farm house, Swayzak rewrites their own rules again.

Words: Mark Pytlík
Photo: Michael Maier



▲ (left to right) Swayzak's David Brown, James Taylor and vocalist Kenny Paterson

North Londoners James Taylor and David “Broon” Brown, collectively known as Swayzak, have spent the last seven years chained to techno and house music. Where early efforts such as 1998’s *Snowboarding In Argentina* saw them look to dub and jazz house for clues, their more recent output (such as 2002’s excellent mix, *Groovetechnology 1.3*) has incorporated elements from the tidy, scissor-cut world of microhouse.

Dubbed *Loops From The Bergerie* (a reference to the French country house where they recorded the album as well as to Serge Gainsbourg’s 1968 soundtrack *Les Loups Dans La Bergerie*), the duo’s fourth proper LP occupies a middle ground between those two headspaces. Featuring vocal turns from Richard Davis, Clair Dietrich, Mathilde Mallen and Brown himself, as well as a host of live instrumentation, *Bergerie* is their most orthodox, song-oriented recording to date. We sat down with Brown to talk about how Swayzak’s recording process has changed in accordance with its output.

What are the main components to your studio setup?

The main thing is a Mac G4 running Logic, Reaktor and Ableton Live 4. We’re also running MOTU 828 Mk2 sound cards and using a lot of analog outboard equipment like an Amek 12-channel mixing desk, which is a nice old warm analog effects desk from the ‘60s, Mackie [mixing] desks and endless compressors and EQs. Most of the ideas for this album were developed in Ableton Live 4.

How did Ableton change the way you worked?

I just love the way that you can use it to put loops together really quickly. Rather than firing them into a sampler, you can just throw them into Ableton. And then you can layer your effects, or copy and paste the loops and try different start points so that you get all sorts of strange patterns going on. Before, Ableton was only loop-based, but [version] 4 has a sampler and MIDI and stuff. I haven’t even gotten around to using that part yet.

Did you get rid of hardware samplers altogether?

We used that and the MPC2000XL. We’d been using hardware samplers up until 2001 when we started just using laptops; for this album we pretty much combined the technology of the software with the best hardware we could get our hands on.

Why do you think the MPC2000 is still the standard for hardware samplers?

I just like that style of playing and sampling, it’s a nice way of doing it. The MPC has still got a nice, powerful warm sound about it. It’s much more powerful sounding than Ableton Live. For this album, everything that we recorded live we resampled into the MPC. Then we played them again through Neumann and Urei analog compressors and kept processing the sounds to get a warmer analog feel.

Are we at a place now in electronic music where, if you’re enough of a gearhead, you can pretty much figure out what software was used to make which track?

There are quite a few tracks like that, yeah, where you can recognize where they’ve been made. I guess Reason is a standard piece of equipment and you can identify something that’s been made in it quite easily. Certain software has its own sound.

Does that mean you consciously try to transcend the sound of the software that you’re using?

It’s a challenge because it’s a little bit too easy to make electronic music—that’s why you have to try and keep it sounding different from everybody else. If you’ve all got the same software, you could end up making the same thing, so I take the usage of the computer only so far. I think by processing something two or three times using software and hardware and plug-ins and outboard equipment, we’ve got a more unique way of doing it. Some of it is really laborious work, but overall it sounds good. Basically on this album, the computer was just a tape machine most of the time—we just used it to record things into.

What was the last record you heard that really impressed you in terms of its production... something where you couldn’t readily put together how it was made?

I loved Matthew Herbert’s big band album. It’s a really interesting technique that he has, taking the traditional big band playing, chopping it up and resampling it. I’m interested to see how he does things. I know he uses pretty basic samplers to get that sound. I’ve always liked bands like Autechre—I’m never quite sure how they get their sounds.

Brian Eno... there was one record of his called *Compact Forest Proposal*. It was part of an installation he did at San Francisco’s MOMA museum. We played at MOMA the same time the exhibition was on and I saw part of it. Then I was in London and I saw the limited edition CD and I bought it, and it was great. Timestretched vocals and loads of digital noise but with classic Eno synth sounds—a beautiful record.

Loops From The Bergerie is out now on K7! www.swayzak.com

Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti, Signer, Greg Davis North American Tour

11/3 - Los Angeles - Silverlake Lounge
 11/4 - San Francisco - Hemlock Tavern
 11/5 - Portland - Holocene
 11/6 - Seattle - Lofi
 11/7 - Vancouver - Lamplighter
 11/11 - Minneapolis - Kitty Kat Klub
 11/12 - Milwaukee TBA
 11/13 - Ann Arbor - Halfass
 11/14 - Chicago - Empty Bottle
 11/15 - Toronto - The Drake
 11/17 - Montreal - Casa del Popolo
 11/18 - Cambridge, MA - Zeitgeist Gallery
 11/19 - Philadelphia - Tritone
 11/20 - New York - Tonic
 11/21 - Washington DC - Warehouse Next Door
 11/22 - Pittsburgh - Garfield Artworks



beep beep



Signer "The New Face of Smiling" (Carpark)



Panda Bear "Young Prayer" (Paw Tracks)



The Prefects
"Amateur Wankers" (Acute)



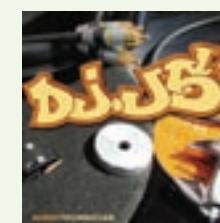
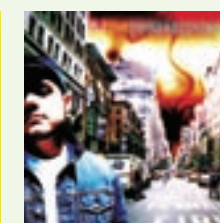
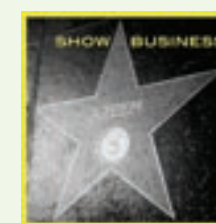
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▲ Azeem



ALBUM REVIEWS 11.04

AZEEM **SHOW BUSINESS**
 DJ DNA **IMPRESSIONISM**
 DJ JS-1 **AUDIO TECHNICIAN**
 NAC ONE **NATURAL REACTION**
 Bomb/US/CD

SF-based indie label pioneer Bomb's influence on the underground hip-hop movement has been considerable. Back when there were few hip-hop labels west of the Rockies, Bomb dedicated itself to what's now called true school aesthetics, establishing a blueprint since emulated by numerous others—including Def Jux, ABB, Warp, Quannum, Revenge and Battle Axe. It's no mere coincidence that Bomb's famous red-label cassette sampler featured tracks by Q-Bert & Madchild, Mystic Journeymen and Blackalicious; one even has to wonder if Shadow's *Entroducing* would have been as widely lauded without Bomb's precedent-setting *Return of the DJ* comp.

An early believer in turntablism, label honcho David Paul has stuck with scratch albums, even when masturbatory "oh...this beat is so f-f-fresh" indulgence overtook actual innovation and quality. And despite an eye for MC talent on a global level (Bomb's *Worldwide* album featured both LAs Dilated Peoples and Germany's Kreators), Bomb has never been quite as successful with rap projects as with DJ-based albums, although it's released its share of sleepers (like last year's tragically-underrated *Bavu Blakes LP*).

Now that the rest of the music world has finally caught up to where Paul was in, oh, 1996, the question is, does Bomb still have powder in its keg? With four artist LPs dropping simultaneously, the stage is set for the label to live up to its rep, or consign itself to the dustbin of history.

More muted than crunk, DJ DNA's *Impressionism* nevertheless suggests there is indeed ammunition in Bomb's armory. One listen, and it's easy to see why the kid has invited comparisons to a certain Mr. Josh Davis, although DNA eschews Shadow-esque noir texture-mapping for a more Prefuse 73-ish vibe, heavier on snares and low-key organ grooves than gothic atmosphere. This is as enjoyable an instrumental breaks album as anyone's released in a while, marked by a real sense of composition without pretentiousness.

DJ JS-1's *Audio Technician*, meanwhile, is somewhat less visionary, but even more technical; *artha*s pastiches are avoided in favor of ear-snapping crossfader workouts. For scratch fans, the bushido beat-juggles and samurai cuts of "Rule #4080" are a definite highlight, and JS's ninja skill is apparent in the way he weaves various hip-hop soundbites into a message-minded audio commentary. Lyric lovers should take great delight in the posse track "Flying Guillotines," on which underground cobras C-Rayz Walz, Acrobatik,

Breez Evahflowin and React all spit venomous verses. Other guests include Rahzel, Immortal Technique, Radix and DJ Spinbad, while JS easily lives up to his billing as a "true master turntablist."

As for Azeem, he's been on a roll of late, but his pairing with the UK's Hydroponic Sound System proves somewhat disappointing. The beats are decent, and Azeem's metaphors are always dope, but *Show Business* lacks the same sort of intuitive collaboration we've come to expect from the Oakland MC's work with Wide Hive and DJ Zeph; prudent Azeemophiles might be better off picking up his other recent projects, *Mayhemistics* and *AlphaZeta*.

Which brings us to *Nac One*, who gets mad props for his work over the years on the aerosol art tip. Yet while he's been flexing his mic chops with the FSC crew for some time, he's been largely unknown outside of the Bay Area—until now. "I put mathematic raps down on Fanatik's tracks," he says, with an old-school flow that could inspire you to bust a headspin on concrete. "At the end of the underground tunnel I see the light," he rhymes on "Streak," a metaphor that could extend to Bomb's future as well. There are far too many underground hip-hop indie labels now for Paul to stand alone as he once did; nevertheless, this strong comeback effort shows he can still hold his head high. *Eric K. Arnold*

presented to you by the organization that produced the fake beheading video aired on Arab TV, and Fox news!



RLR

RECORD LABEL RECORDS



Kush Arora - Underwater Jihad



With roots in the noise and dark ambient scenes, Kush Arora's style has evolved over 8 years into a beautiful mingling of Indian bhangra, dub, exclusive dance hall vocals from Jamaican guests, and alien atmospheric sound collage. 3 years in the making, *Underwater Jihad* is a very terrifying musical crossover.

Fluorescent Grey - Gaseous Opal Orbs

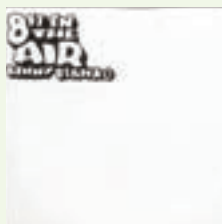
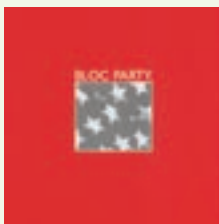
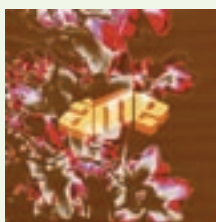
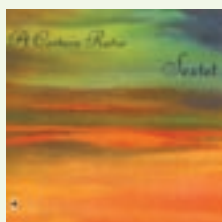


Step into a maze of found sounds, world rhythms, and organic beats derived from recordings of electricity, fire, water and beyond. A new IDM album that blurs the line between live and sampled instruments, *Fluorescent Grey's Gaseous Opal Orbs* is just that, an unclassifiable piece of musical machinery that could only be wrought from 8 years of innovation and experimentation.

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A CERTAIN RATIO SEXTET
Universal Sound/UK/CD

Originally released in 1982 on Factory Records, A Certain Ratio's second proper album transforms funk and dub into alien and oddly emotionless forms of expression—and that's ultimately what makes ACR so interesting. *Sextet* sounds utterly distinctive due to Martha Tilson's voice and Jeremy Kerr's bass. Tilson's voice is flat and pallid, yet spectral, like a novocained Exene Cervenka, while Kerr's bass is flanged, bubbling, elastically loop-da-looping, always gracefully guiding ACR's so-loose-they're-tight tracks along with Donald Johnson's athletic percussion. Despite the plethora of excellent avant-funk bands now, nobody's really advanced this mutant genre with ACR's uniquely chilly strangeness. *Dave Segal*

ÂME
Sonar Kollektiv/GER/CD

Âme, je t'aime. Thanks for sticking to what you do best—electro-fied house deepness with more than a nod to Metro Area—and not following the current trend for albums to sound like eclectic DJ sets. Your deliberate builds, non-kitschy hand claps and subtle dashes of dub stylings are the stuff of early morning warehouse bliss, when only the dancers remain. Your murky mood on "Ojomo" may stall a bit, but the sexy chug of "Hydrolic Dog" and the restrained piano stabs on "Shiro" are *trés magnifique*. Two Germans with a French name, lovers of West End Records and Weather Report—whatever your contradictions, *merçi beaucoup* for leaving them out of this stunningly straightforward album. *Peter Nicholson*

ISSA BAGAYOGO TASSOUMAKAN
Six Degrees/US/CD
EX-CENTRIC SOUND SYSTEM WEST NILE FUNK
Indieland/US/CD

Two different approaches to African electronica, two brilliant results. *N'goni* player Issa Bagayogo plugs spacious, minimal beats into his virtuoso acoustic effort, centering around unique, nonchalent vocals. Brooklyn-based bassist Yossi Fine (Ex-Centric Sound System) comes from the reverse, laying down heavy grooves joined by patches of *calabash* and *balafo* in a Western twist on Carnavaal rhythms. *Tassoukman* ("Voice of Fire") takes Malian blues into 21st century digitalism; *West Nile Funk* extends Ghana's traditional repertoire into American clubs and Jamaican dancehalls. The sound system remains blaring for both as African folk forges ahead. *Derek Beres*

MARCUS BELGRAVE GEMINI
STEVE REID RHYTHMATISM
Soul Jazz/UK/CD

This pair of rare, expressive mid-70s soul-jazz reissues from two unsung players should garner generous critical attention but regrettably will probably be relegated to serious collector circles. Belgrave's trumpet ricochets like a pinballing comet and his self-penned compositions launch into dark, cold crystalline spaces. Radiating passion in even their most intellectualized solos, his electric nine-piece group includes copious percussion, mini moog and electric piano. Reid's album is more organic and grounded, the work of a smaller acoustic band pushing hard at rhythmic boundaries. His drumming is aggressive but never forced, propelling these tunes into epic, languid climaxes, especially ecstatic album opener "Kai" and the surreally funky "Rocks (For Cannonball)." Curious about the dark wave of '70s groove jazz? Here's your introduction. *Jonathan Zwickel*

BENNY BLANKO 8FT IN THE AIR
Playhouse/GER/CD

Honey-glazed deep house shoulders up to hip-hop, laidback robo-funk segues into snappy house, clean click-house dissolves into hazy downbeat—does Benny Blanko fancy himself a master of all trades? Or is he simply a musical schizophrenic? One thing is for certain, however—the Homestyle label boss is clearly adept at working within established stylistic parameters, and he injects each track with buoyancy and flair. Though far from inspiring or innovative, *8ft in the Air* is a gleeful little album, with enough variety and a surfeit of solid tracks to keep interest alive. *Christine Hoich*

BLOC PARTY
Dim Mak/US/CD

Pedigreed by Glaswegian pogo-poppers du jour Franz Ferdinand, Bloc Party has quickly ascended by deftly remaining self-aware of and accessible through the South London band's influences. This six-track EP collects the mid-20's quartet's first singles, "Banquet/Staying Fat" and "She's Hearing Voices," presently chronologically backwards. This is lanky music, scrawls of angular, twitchingly plucked guitars, jags of prickly, tightly wound fret flurries buoyed

by gelatinous basslines and charging drums. While the lineage of A Certain Ratio, Gang of Four, the Fall and the Cure is apparent, the skittish flails are additionally touched by Britpop yelp. Bloc Party acknowledges the remaining circumference of its influences with the sequenced clap and synth squiggles of a "Banquet" remix. Bloc rockin'. *Tony Ware*

BRIAN AND CHRIS 3
Dielectric/US/CD

San Franciscans Brian and Chris's dexterous mix of organic instruments with detours into a cyclical, synthetic world is what gives 3 its narcotic tone. The duo also manages to make acoustic guitar seem like a natural match to a parallel, computerized hum. Despite all that, their focus on the organic and their quick shifts between shadowy and bright just add up to the same melancholy melodies that emo and post-rock bands have been kickin' out for a decade now. All Brian and Chris do is give it a refresher with their drum machine. Too bad that's not new either. *Carla Costa*

BUCK 65 THIS RIGHT HERE IS BUCK 65
V2/US/CD

Those familiar with Richard Terfry know him as Buck 65, a husky-voiced truckstop-weary storyteller (and turntablist) doling out droll rhymes backed by hip-hop and tripped-out country. This comp collects songs from the last five years, like "Wicked and Weird," "Centaur" and "Pants on Fire." Many come from last year's *Talkin' Honky Blues*, for which he added a live band and honed the countrified concept inspired by his Nova Scotia upbringing. Like the bastard child of Slug and Tom Waits, Buck 65 is a one-man genre that seems a much better idea than rap-metal. He also looks quite dapper in a three-piece suit. *Liz Cordingley*

CHICO & COOLWADDA PARALLEL
456 Entertainment/US/CD

Chico's drawl dips it low like Snoop Dogg's, but even with an arsenal of glossy-beat gangsta cruisers and a healthy South Los Angeles resume—including a 2001 hit with Nate Dogg—C&C don't ride too much like those other cats from the 213 on their second record. Their jagged cadences span topics from club bluster to beleaguered ghetto life, but the beats are all hotwired synths and polished, high-steppin' sway, occasionally coming off like a collabo between Dr. Dre and Sticky. Fun game: Every time they spit their signature onomatopoeia, "pssssh," jack up the hooptie. *Julianne Shepherd*

DAARA J BOOMERANG
Wrasse/SEN/CD

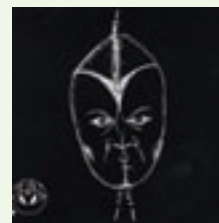
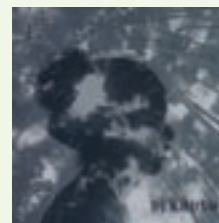
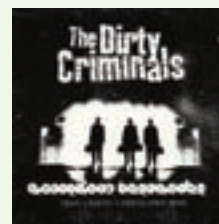
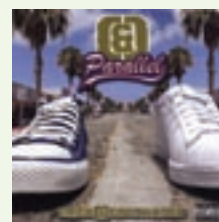
While the Bronx claims birthrights to rap, Faada Freddy of Senegal-based Daara J cites *tasso*—the West African oral tradition—as precursor to anything flowing from the States. He's right, but this doesn't stop his outfit from taking the tightest American production techniques and layering in aerobic feats of French, Wolof, English and Spanish. The result is booty-shaking beats with heady mind messages as the trio unmasks dirty politics and social corruption with acute, appreciable dexterity. The heavy thump of the ragga-tinged "Exodus" is enough to set anyone on a new journey. *Derek Beres*

GREG DAVIS SOMNIA
Kranky/US/CD

Multi-instrumentalist Davis' third album veers off the mellifluous folktronica path of 2002's *Arbor* and 2004's *Curling Pond Woods* to tackle academic composition and '70s proto-ambient. From the opening track, "Archer," which recalls classic dronerwerks like David Behrman's *On The Other Ocean*, Steve Hillage's *Rainbow Dome Musick*, and Fripp/Eno's *No Pussyfooting*, Davis establishes a compelling integrity and depth to his tonal tapestries. Whether mirroring Charlemagne Palestine's full-bodied organ oscillations or conjuring Plutonian Muzak, Davis displays an appreciation of minutely gradual development rare in this age of pandemic ADD. His acute attention to detail and keen ear for eerie, glitchy ambience richly reward headphone fiends. *Dave Segal*

DEAD COMBO
Output/UK/CD

From the opening hissy peck of Manhattan-based Finnish duo Dead Combo's drum machine, it's apparent this pair is locked in a suicide pact to resurrect Lower East Side sleaze, or at least look sweaty trying. Skintight leather and stained white cotton plastered to them, Dead Combo's greasers hunch over a sputtering, squirrely moog and a mauled guitar, both lurching sneers atop a glam-disco stomp as easily descending in to brooding murk. From the stuttering "You Don't Look So Good" to a skuzzy, slashed-up cover of Bowie's "Let's Dance," this stylized apocalyptic biker gang lets fly ricocheting rivets of searing see-saw squall that may not be as foot-forward as much of



DJ KRUSH

DJ KRUSH JAKU
Red Ink/US/CD

The master of mood takes it out of the clubs and into his personal mountaintop temple. Krush has always had a gorgeously velvet touch, but with the recruitment of koto (Japanese strings), wooden shakuhachi flutes and a phalanx of wailing, wandering poets (including saxophonist Akira Sakata, Mr. Lif and Aesop Rock), *Jaku* takes on an outdoor lushness of thick, cool moss. Well into the third decade of a richly storied career, Krush offers *Jaku* as his uniquely fractal view of the different offshoots of his cultural "roots": equal parts monster-movie soundtrack, Zen mist, contempo hip-hop sceneristism and sweaty taiko thumping. As always, Krush proves himself the disciple of balance. The sounds in *Jaku* are dense and even uptempo, but never crowd for attention: they float divine, as fog over a lake. *Selena Hou*

Output's retro-tinged roster, but is as affecting as it is affected, nonetheless. *Tony Ware*

DOLLBOY PLANS FOR A MODERN CITY
Different Drummer/UK/CD

Resplendent in all its languorous glory, Dollboy's *Plans for a Modern City* aspires to a place in the pantheon of ambient music on par with classics such as Global Communications' *76:14* or The KLF's *Chill Out*. And while it falls short of that mark, it does so only by the slightest of margins. Luminous synth melodies, shimmering slide guitar riffs, matching piano couplets and muted trumpet refrains all play a part—you'd be hard-pressed to guess this could be the work of a live band without envisioning the four-piece slumped over their instruments on stage in turn. Navel-gazers take note. This record is your call to lie down and be counted amongst Dollboy's fans. *Brock Phillips*

THE DIRTY CRIMINALS
ORGANIZED CONFUZION
International DJ Gigolo/GER/CD

I'd forgotten that techno could be so, well, grim. In *Organized Confuzion*, no one's fucking around here; even the sleaziness of the bounce sounds dead serious. No panty play-

time for the Dirty Criminals! They've got their brows furrowed and their jaws firmly set. Fools are working, and hard. Like repetitive, determined techno? Grind your teeth away to this one, kids. *Selena Hou*

DZIHAN & KAMIEN ORCHESTRA
LIVE IN VIENNA
BOSSACUCANOVA
UMA BATIDA DIFERENTE
Six Degrees/US/CD

The Viennese government dug Vlado & Mario's *Gran Riserva* (Couch Records) and ponied-up for a 22-piece ensemble of noted world musicians, featuring drummers Sammy Figueroa (Miles Davis) and Andrew Small (Massive Attack), *darbuka* master Ahmet Misirli and vocalist Ma. Dita. It's a big world take on DK's Eastern-stringed, jazz-tinged downtempo. Final US versions will offer a CD of remixes from Richard Dorfmeister, Howie B, etc. Rio trio Bossacucanova doles out *Uma Batida Diferente* ("a different beat"), focusing on current fixation with all things Brazilian. Pals/labelmates Zuco 103 assist, with guitarist/songwriter/band dad Roberto Menescal, plus samba/bossa nova idols. Both albums update material spiffily. *Stacy Meyn*



THE EMPEROR MACHINE

THE EMPEROR MACHINE AIMEE TALLULAH IS HYPNOTISED
Depth Charge/UK/CD

For the polymathic Andrew Meecham, too much is never quite enough. Having already attacked the realms of punk funk (as Big 200), tech-dub-house (in his Chicken Lips guise) and even the pop charts (remember Bizarre Inc?) with great fervor, Mr. Meecham now turns his attention to the resurfaced (and somewhat over-hyped) genres of Italo-disco and electro with his Emperor Machine project. As you might imagine, *Tallulah* is for the most part a synth-laden affair (the standout "SH3A" was composed entirely on the Roland synthesizer of same name), but smatterings of live flute, bass and violin give it a certain progressive flourish not often encountered in today's soundclash. If, as Lenin said, one must occasionally take one step backwards in order to take two steps forward, then The Emperor Machine succeeds both as a memento of the past and as a door to the future. *Alex Posell*



JIMMY EDGAR BOUNCE, MAKE, MODEL Warp/UK/CD

What will be the butcher's bill of metrosexualized hip-hop after all the credit card and child-support debts are tallied up? Jimmy Edgar embodies that genre with pedicured and indoor-tanned style over substance. His excursions as Kristuit Salu and Morris Nightingale brilliantly explored microwave-damaged glitch-hop, but *Bounce* is just too safe. Edgar takes Playboy Channel groove-jazz and stutters each melody and beat to create an autistic bump 'n' grind. The results have a glaring coolness with cologne-ad synths and harmonies that fetishize unisex bodysuits. This music verges on cliché, but it's fabulous what a dab of mousse and facial cream can hide. *Cameron Macdonald*

ERNESTO'S ALBUM Hollow/SWE/CD SHUR-I-KAN WAYPOINTS Freerange/UK/CD

It's hard to live up to high expectations. So these two

were at a bit of a disadvantage, considering how hot singles like Ernesto's "Here My" and Shur-I-Kan's "Generations" were. For the most part, both albums succeed, with Ernesto's ably displaying his smooth vocals in styles from bossa to broken and Shur-I-Kan flexing his considerable skills on the keys over crisply syncopated beats on numbers like "Half Step." Each could have used editing, dropping some of the slower tracks like the schmaltzy "Especial" on *Album* and *Waypoints'* "Reflections," but I'm being pretty picky. Solid albums from solid producers blurring the boundaries of jazz dance. *Peter Nicholson*

FILA BRAZILLIA DICKS Twenty Three/UK/CD

You either dig Fila's formula, or you don't. If you're familiar, there's hardly a letdown here, as the quadratic equations these blokes have coded are fully sourced for your enjoyment. But if you think downtempo is nothing more than a descriptor that we can swallow halfheartedly, over a cocktail, while internally connot-

ing something more akin to Urban Outfitters' music, this is not for you. What happens when good DJs make so-so producers? It's never anything more than Lenny Kravitz's warm shag carpet, it's the infallibility of falling—when you never got up. This is Downtempo. And these guys are Dicks. *J. David Marston.*

FOUR TET MY ANGEL ROCKS BACK AND FORTH Domino/UK/CD+DVD

Four Tet (a.k.a. Kieran Hebden) used everything lovable about experimental rock and electronic music to make one of last year's most brilliant albums, "Rounds." Here, Icarus remixes the album's latest single, "My Angel..." into something perhaps even more gossamer, and Hebden turns in two new abstract tracks. But the real treats on this CD/DVD double-disc EP are the videos. Of the four, including "As Serious As Your Life," most notable are those by surrealist Japanese director Woof Wan-Bau. Magical and creepy, as surrealism is wont, his latest for "My Angel" brings out the dark side of this delicate tune. *Liz Cordingley*

THE GO FIND MIAMI DUO505 LATE Morr/GER/CD

The Go Find traffics in gentle electronic pop; *Miami* has the high twee boy vocals like the Postal Service without Ben Gibbard's keening soar, and the light, jangly propulsion of Schneider TM without the vocoder razor-edge. One-man band Dieter Sermeus is true to the Morr sound: meandering innocence full of peaceable chirps and even, gleaming beats. *Miami* drifts like the golden and yet inconsequential dance of dust motes in a shaft of afternoon sun. Morr's other offering, Duo505 featuring B. Fleischmann and Herbert Weixelbaum, is a tinkerty romance. A friend once described Fleischmann's music as what it must sound like to fall in love, and I'm a believer: *Late* is music that talks in tingles and electric fuzz and goose-bumps. *Selena Hou*

GOLD CHAINS & SUE CIE WHEN THE WORLD WAS OUR FRIEND Kitty-yo/GER/CD

Gold Chains' hop may be a little less pronounced after hooking up with Sue Cie, but the results are still undeniably hip. Topher La Fata's b-boy leanings were never that overt but, aside from vocals on a couple of tracks, they're all but removed from *When The World Was Our Friend*. Instead, the pair's disparate influences have led to a discordant disco middleground that proves a perfect partner for Chains' muted musings—Berlin's Vladislav Delay also pitched in during the mix down. "Better Together," the sub-bass-fest and impassioned opening track, is the standout. *Dave Stenton*

TIM HECKER MIRAGES Alien8/CAN/CD

Tim Hecker enjoys tossing his listeners into the open sea with only their hypothermic hallucinations to keep them company. He typically chisels a pristine din out of soot-clogged guitar distortion and symphonics that litter from the heavens. *Mirages* is rather conservative, resembling a B-side collection of his two earlier albums, but the drifting cadence and metallic timbres that color its information-pollution blues all keep things engrossing. The opener, "Acephale," first erupts into a teeth-gnashing guitar solo before nodding off into an absinthe stupor, while the highlights, "Neither More or Less" and "Celestina" are both brooding stroboscope soundtracks. Stay asleep, Tim. *Cameron Macdonald*

HIGH CONTRAST HIGH SOCIETY Hospital/UK/CD

Releasing a sophomore album in the current drum and bass world—a scene plagued by formulaic tracks and said to be dying its death—is a risky venture, but if anyone's up to the challenge it's Lincoln Barrett. His music, influenced by multiple genres and unpredictably complex enough to interest even the most jaded d&b head, speaks for itself, be it the super-funked out

hotplate of the moment "Racing Green," the grime-infused "Angels and Fly" or MC Dynamite's clever lyrics on the title track. If drum and bass is dead, then Barrett's proved the afterlife was worth waiting for. *Jenn Marston*

HOWIE B, CRISPIN HUNT & WILL O'DONOVAN MAYONNAISE LunaticWorks/US/2CD

Mayonnaise...that cool, refreshing drink. The white-folks staple gets mildly grooved-on courtesy of Scottish überproducer Howie B and his best mates. Former Longpigs frontman/current political reformist Crispin Hunt and Will O'Donovan (think Irish Howie B) juggle slightly distracted vocals over smooth and creamy beat. The echoes of the dead and nearly so (John Lennon, David Bowie, Peter Gabriel-era Genesis, Daniel Lanois, Sting) career over a proggy base of shifting melodies and "harmonizing guys" effects. Like its namesake, the flavoring is subtle, so no big beats or blowsy vox posturing here. A little mellow for my taste, but it's good to cleanse the palate occasionally. *Stacy Mayn*

I AM X KISS AND SWALLOW Recall/FRA/CD

Kiss and Swallow, the debut solo effort from Sneaker Pimps' Chris Corner, is excellently produced. It also wears its influences on its sleeve, coming off as both over-conceived and over-indulgent. While there are certainly some good dancefloor moments amidst this flashback to the NIN/EBM/Cabaret Voltaire days, one can't help thinking there's a bit more ego-stroking going on here than is absolutely necessary. We know, we know, musicians are megalomaniacs, but a little less studio sheen and a little more grit could have brought this project to its full potential. *Alex Posell*

INTRICATE IN PECTRA Spezial Material/SWIT/CD

From the ominous synth tones that open *In Pectra* to the stunted and splintered beat structures that are the album's hallmark, Intricate wear their musical influences on their sleeves. Witness the loping stride of a Prefuse 73 rhythm here, a monochromatic Autechre melody there—this isn't the sort of album that single-handedly carves out an entirely new genre, but it is one of the more sturdily-constructed experimental electronic full-lengths as of late. Unlike many of their contemporaries, Intricate have clearly mastered their machines without becoming slaves to software in the process—tracks such as "Squirrel" and "Efforts" could easily hold their own against vintage *Artificial Intelligence*-era IDM. *Brock Phillips*

KRUMBSNATCHA LET THE TRUTH BE TOLD Golden Eyes/US/CD

As any boom bap disciple will tell you, "real" MCs are a dying breed, constantly losing ground to caricatures of libido-enhanced gangstas, oversensitive emo-thugs and jiggy chart toppers. By all definitions, Boston's Krumsnatcha is a *real* MC. The problem is that Krumsnatcha's monotonous flow and self-reflexive themes suggests that he's more adept at guest spots than carrying an entire album. In fact, the album's strongest tracks are the ones featuring guest turns from Ghostface ("Thorough") and Styles P ("Bang Bang"). With a lackluster effort such as this, it's easy to see why "real" MCs are going the way of the dinosaurs. *Sam Chennault*

MACROMANTICS HYPERBOLIC LOGIC Penny Drop/AUST/CD

John Kerry's people should hire Romy Hoffman as a speechwriter. With airtight lyricism, brooding, musty-basement beats and a directness that'd make apples and earthworms wither, the Australian MC known as Macromantics cuts to the inside; she fiercely asserts "The world isn't color or black and white/it's bloodshed," before dropping the beat to declare her mission: "Macromantics believes in peace and the kids." Like spiritual homeboys Aesop Rock and The Streets, she also directs her lyrics inward, questioning her psychic balance—but when she spits delicious consonant clusters like, "Yep/dead retro/mind's on death row/hang onto the cable for dear life/don't let go!" you think her cadence alone might be enough to save her. *Julianne Shepherd*

MANZEL MIDNIGHT THEME Dopebrother/US/CD

With every unearthing of a "lost" record, it seems less likely that a true masterpiece is still waiting to be found. It is, then, a special event when a much-mythologized classic comes to light, as Kenny Dope has done with Manzel's *Midnight Theme*. Already familiar to the masses as a heavily sampled record, Dope and partner the Undercover Brother re-edited this paragon. Clearly a studio project, Manzel forgoes a "band" sound in sake of crystalline production

and solos whose existence seems to be that of an arrangement enabler. Sharing in similar rhythmic and structural concepts as Herbie Hancock's *Man Child* (not to mention an almost identical keyboard set up) *Midnight Theme* relies less on virtuosic performance than killer dance floor sensibilities. *Nick Fallett*

MAROONS AMBUSH Quannum/US/CD

Ambush is the startling debut EP from Bay Area supergroup Maroons (Blackalicious' Chief Xcel and Latyrx's Lateef the Truth Seeker). On songs such as "Lester Hayes" and "Best of Me," Chief Xcel employs stabs of live instrumentation that pivot and pull against old-school drum breaks and buoyant bass lines. Lateef holds up his end of the bargain with his smooth wordplay. On "If" he rails against Bush, while "Beautiful You" finds him pondering existence. The balance between Lateef's heavy lyrics and the Chief's funky production is scrumptious, and we can only hope that this is a delectable appetizer for a proper full-length. *Sam Chennault*

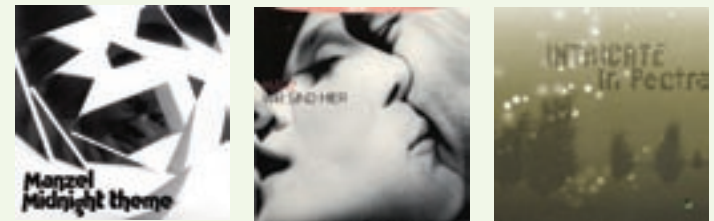
MÄRZ WIR SIND HIER TOOG LOW ETENDUE Karaoke Kalk/GER/CD

It just takes these two albums to effectively showcase the constantly diversifying brilliance of the Karaoke Kalk label. März's second LP

of folksy micro-processed song-based exploration is every bit as good as the romance-swept cover promises. It's like all of London's '60s folk scene hopped into a future bound rocket and became one with their duct taped ramshackle PowerBooks that gave us this. French sonic troubadour Toog's elegy to a threatening post-9/11 world, "Low Etendue," features Asia Argento and sound artist Digiki lending the album a similar fusion, only with spoken vocals and throbbing, chilling futuristic synthery. *Brian Paul*

MINIT NOW RIGHT HERE Staubgold/GER/CD

As Minit, Australian expats in Berlin Jasmine Guffond and Torben Tilly have been making spectral drone music for some time. After a few years out of earshot, they have emerged with a gorgeous work in *Now Right Here*. The 20-minute title track opener is the album's centerpiece. Building slowly, it gains a steady momentum, transforming French-horn tones into an immense, infinite drone that can only be described as ecstatic. The remaining album continues its interest in sustained tones and effervescent textures. And despite what may on the surface seem like very little in the way of *action*, it in fact reveals itself to be an immensely rewarding work. *Alexis Georgopoulos*



THE EBONY RHYTHM BAND

THE EBONY RHYTHM BAND SOUL HEART TRANSPLANT: THE LAMP SESSIONS Now-Again/US/CD

Score another victory for the diehard diggers: Through relentless legwork, Stones Throw/Now Again vinyl archivist DJ Egon unearthed The Ebony Rhythm Band from obscurity and presents them to vintage funk aficionados on Stones Throw's reissue label. With a copy of the band's original "Soul Heart Transplant/Drugs Ain't Cool" 7" eBaying for over \$3,000, it's clearly time the world gets a full taste of these Indianapolis groove wizards. DJs will flip their shit—the Nocentelli-esque drum break on their psychedelic soul-jazz cover of "Light My Fire" is jaw-droppingly fresh; paired with gothic organ flights and a tribal-chant finale the song is a true rare groove gem. *Jonathan Zwickel*



SECRET FREQUENCY CREW

SECRET FREQUENCY CREW FOREST OF THE ECHO DOWNS Schematic-Asphodel/US/CD

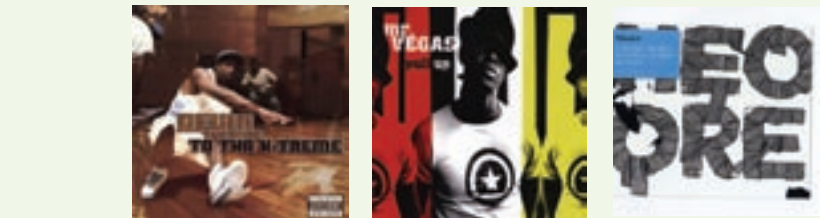
New York via Miami trio Secret Frequency Crew traffic in downtempo electronics. But rather than inducing snoozing or scoring your next purchase at The Gap as so many artists in these styles do, SFC make tracks in which a surfeit of things happen on their debut full-length—very lush, psychedelic things. While SFC occasionally break out some synth tones that flirt with late Tangerine Dream cheesiness or the more limp-wristed thumbsuckers on Morr Music's roster, more often the Crew forge luxurious productions that disorient and induce bliss like Boards Of Canada or Depth Charge. SFC takes some weird tangents, too, including "Baron Of The Bog" which recalls pop-psych oddity Kim Fowley and the uneasy ambience of "Black Moss Caves Pt. 2." But SFC save their best material for the end: the exotic, richly detailed funk of "Photovoric Inchworms," whose psychedelic effects create the illusion you're moving through alien flora and fauna. *Dave Segal*



DEVIN THE DUDE

DEVIN THE DUDE TO THE X-TREME
Rap-A-Lot/US/CD

Like Too Short, Andre 3000, Rick James, Slick Rick and Joe Tex all rolled into one affable pothead-next-door, Devin The Dude's been preferring slow-paced tales of weed-smoking aliens, freestyling rednecks, fudged responsibility and pickups gone wrong as if they weren't flawlessly subtle strokes of genius. Indifferent and defiantly odd as ever, though, he still gets slept on, even after 2002's masterpiece-like *Just Tryin' Ta Live*. To *Tha X-Treme* finds Devin reverting even further into his own bizarre little corner of the hip-hop world, treading the waters of personal and emotional vulnerability on "She Was Gone" and "Cooter Brown," getting mad goofy on "What?," all over beats from a largely unknown set of southern producers. *Jesse Serwer*



MR VEGAS PULL UP
Delicious Vinyl/US/CD

Jamaican singjay Mr. Vegas has been drastically underexposed in the American market until his breakout smash (and title track) on the Coolie Dance riddim, which spawned a summer of bangin' remixes (the Culo feat. Lil Jon included herein). This is a smart move by Delicious Vinyl and Vegas because this flow will penetrate the reaches of Kansas with ease. The LP also includes "Bad Man" and "Under Mi Sensi," both serious hits with big ups. Plenty of new material here brings the dancehall phenomenon deeper, and oh is he bashing 'em up. How can one man make a song about a Ninja motorcycle sound so cool? *J. David Marston*

MUSTANG BACK HOME
Compost/GER/CD
AS ONE OUT OF THE DARKNESS
Ubiquity/US/CD

When techno-jazz heavyweights Alex Attias and Kirk DeGiorgio flex their studio muscles, the direction of entire genres can shift. Broken beats are rounded up and given steady work as Attias' Mustang project brings the cinematic drama, complete with swells and kettle

drums. Even vocalist Bembe Segue is given a challenge in the operatic "10,000 Leagues Deeper." With *Out of the Darkness*, DeGiorgio opts to uplift. However he makes no compromises breaking down and building up beats, turning in epics of his own ("Leviathan," "Hope"). Though Mustang's dusky tones are slightly more seductive, both albums make pondering the future of future jazz less predictable. *Dan Sicks*

NON TERRA INCOGNITA: AMBIENT WORKS 1975 PRESENT
Mute/UK/CD

Boyd Rice (Non) has a reputation as a nasty nihilist, but he's produced some of the most exquisitely gorgeous music ever—even an atheist might call some of it heavenly. *Terra Incognita* surveys Rice's nearly 30-year tenure as a maverick sound sculptor. Over these 13 tracks, Rice proves himself to be the master of hypnotic loops, be they lush, chiming Cocteau Twinsky guitars, scything zithers, stereopanned harps, or decaying tintinnabulation. And for sinners, Rice offers "A Taste Of Blood," a sonic catastrophe in miniature that captures the howls of the damned as hellfire consumes them. That's entertainment. *Dave Segal*

OCTET CASH AND CARRY SONGS
Plain/US/CD

The high-speed harpsichord and tender tenor vocals that mark *Cash and Carry Songs'* opening track, "Hey Bonus," are a perfect intro to the radiance of Octet's twisted-up pop. That sort of contradictory lush-minimalism is to be expected from a French electronica duo. The way Octet strums their synthesizers as if they're classical strings and manipulate their mixers with a sleight of hand is hard to resist and makes even the trite lyrics that accompany their forays into r&b easily forgiven. Moving from instinctive instrumentation to concise composition, Octet puts together a record of finely crafted dance tracks. *Carla Costa*

OSSO BUCCO/LJUBILDEN & PILOTEN
Nosordo/SPN/CD
THEODORE A SUMMER SHE HAS NEVER BEEN, A WINTER SHE FEARS
Lo/UK/CD

CD *numero uno* for Nosordo is a split disc filled with warmth, doing its best to raise all the cochlear hairs at once, without leaving split ends. The first half, Osso Bucco (Greg Kowalsky) meanders in the rich caverns of textured sound, a more tingy and electric sensed pop ambient. Ljubilden (Kristofer Strom) handles the second half of the disc and he plays with our folk sensibility but thankfully leaves much of the music sparse and unprocessed. Lo Recordings' Jon Tye is one of the finest label curators around, and his newest find, Theodore, adds to his already distinguished repertoire of artists. Like a mulch bin of rock that decomposes into sweet vignettes of sincerity and organic warmth, Theodore pursues traditional instruments with a field recordist's sense and an electronic artist's acumen. *J. David Marston*

PANDA BEAR YOUNG PRAYER
ARIEL PINK'S HAUNTED GRAFFITI THE DOLDRUMS
Paw Tracks/US/CD

If Animal Collective are known for divergent but not mutually exclusive sides—tumultuous freakouts and delicate psychedelic folk—with *Young Prayer*, Noah Lennox makes clear which part he contributes. Made after the death of his father, the mood is quiet, deeply personal and also ecstatic, its vignettes rising and recede according to their own logic, along the way recalling everything from Linda Sharrock to Tyrannosaurus Rex. The first non-Animal Collective release on Paw Tracks, Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti, on the other hand is another cup of tea altogether. A strange voyage through a land of lofi prog pop, it represents the mind that is nothing if not unhinged. An acquired taste, this one. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

PSAPP TIGER, MY FRIEND
Leaf/UK/CD
S PUKING & CRYING
Suicide Squeeze/US/CD

These bedroom pop duos are both equal parts indie chanteuse and beat geek. But while S's Jenn Ghetto alternates between despondence and all the fervor of someone moonlighting in a speed metal band (she is), Psapp's Galia Durant sings wistful pop animated by Carim Clasmann's gizmo beats. On the second S album, Ghetto enlists Josh Wackerly to tinker with her guitar-fueled sadcore. On Psapp's debut, Durant's classic melody cajoles Clasmann's plucked violins and squeaky toys. If you imagine them in tiny music boxes, Psapp is dancing with the ballerina while S is jamming gears to get out. Both are captivating. *Liz Cordingley*

Q AND NOT U POWER
Dischord/US/CD

Spaced between an equal number of EPs, the third full-length album by Washington D.C. trio Q And Not U, *Power*, would be better named "Nimble." There is no brute strength exhibited, instead *Power* is 13 tracks of bobbing, buoyant dexterity. For the most part post-hardcore skronking yelps have been replaced by an elastic smelting of buffed synths, rounded kicks and bass runs, more cleanly kempt yet still bristly guitars and falsetto rather than fractured cries, though there is still sinevy angularity in the second half, specifically the ramping squeals of "X-Polynation" and Fugazi-ish call-and-response of "Book of Flags." Q And Not U have not gone "New York," though hints of Talking Heads and the DFA might be traceable in the powerfully epoxied jitters. *Tony Ware*

RA THE RUGGED MAN DIE RUGGED MAN DIE
Nature Sounds/US/CD

A *Soundbombing* regular whose mentally warped white boy style pre-dates Eminem by a half-decade, RA The Rugged Man is fully aware his shot at fame has passed him by. It's just that he doesn't give a fuck, or so he'd have you believe on "Lessons," a blow-by-blow account of missed opportunities and unrealized purist aspira

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**PSAPP
TIGER, MY FRIEND**
CD: BAY 41CD
limited LP: BAY 41V

A melodic masterpiece from this new London duo. Broken toys squeak, microphones crackle and electronics pulsate, while breathy female vocals smooth over the rough edges. The new sound of real pop music



**EFTERKLANG
TRIPPER**
CD: BAY 40CD
limited 2xLP: BAY 40V

Combining glacial strings, febrile electronic rhythms, hushed male-female vocals and a Greenlandic choir, this Danish ten-piece balances a fragile delicacy with overpowering intensity in the tradition of Sigur Rós, My Bloody Valentine and Múm



**TRIOSK
MOMENT RETURNS**
CD: BAY 39CD
limited LP: BAY 39V

Previously heard on ~scape collaborating with Jan Jelinek, the Australian trio strike out on their first album for The Leaf Label. Surprising and inspired real-instrument improvisation layered with loop-finding samples and electronics. "Moment Returns" tone poems represent a picking up of the thread first sewn by Thelonious Monk on Round Midnight" Jazzwise

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tions (“I don’t want fans who don’t know who G Rap is”). His first full-length to see release, *Die Rugged Man Die* isn’t the first one RAs made, which is why this seriocomic tragedy featuring J-Zone beats and a guest appearance by the Bad Brains sounds so self-assured. *Jezebel Serwer*

PHIL RANELIN INSPIRATION *Wide Hive/US/CD*

From the progressives at Wide Hive comes this surprisingly tame, almost traditional set of genteel post-bop jazz. Ranelin is an unsung trombone hero of the 1970s Detroit free-funk scene, but here he settles into a relaxed, burnished mood marked by lush horn parts and elegant soloing. His nine-piece band includes several saxes, piano, bass clarinet, upright bass, drums and percussion, arranged with a natural grace that never seems overcrowded or abrasive, reminiscent of the early ‘60s Blue Note catalog. “This One’s For Trane” stands out as the album’s most compelling, ascendant scorcher thanks to an inspired excursion by the legendary Pharaoh Sanders. *Jonathan Zwickel*

SHOCK G FEAR OF A MIXED PLANET *33rd Street/US/CD*

Fear of a Mixed Planet might be a reference to a classic Public Enemy record and “Weesom Hustlas” sounds like a re-make of EPMD’s “You’re a Customer,” but Digital Underground mastermind Shock G isn’t on any retro shit with his solo



THE ROYALS

THE ROYALS DUBBING WITH THE ROYALS *Pressure Sounds/UK/CD*

Jamaican singer, producer and bandleader Roy Cousins was active with his group The Royals from 1968 through 1979. They released a number of devastating vocal harmony albums in the style of that era, typified by trios like Wailing Souls, The Viceroy and the Mighty Diamonds—groups that could literally make you feel their “sufferation” and woes, singing songs written on ghetto corners from the depths of their hearts. The Royals line up changed often and Cousins went on to produce brilliant music for Black Uhuru refugee Don Carlos, singer Earl Sixteen and the conscious DJ Charlie Chaplain. This second collection of Cousins’ work on Pressure Sounds captures his extraordinary dub works recorded at the great studios of the time—King Tubby’s, Harry J’s, Tuff Gong, Channel One—with engineers like Prince Jammy, Scientist, Lee Perry and Errol T on the mix (he kept all the recording sessions notes, included in the CD booklet). This was the zenith of the classic dub era; contemporary producers can’t achieve with today’s digital technology the eerie sounds and punch-out board techniques heard here. Snippets of the Royals, Prince Far-I, I-Roy and even Gregory Isaacs voice echo amongst slices of trumpet and rolling waves of B3 organs. These 19 tracks express the majesty of reggae and dub at their peak, and mystery of how much we’ve yet to learn about the musicians, engineers and lost recording sessions that Cousins helped define. *Tomas*

debut. Though eclectic to a fault, *Fear* nonetheless finds the producer/MC moving in a forward direction. “Cherry Flava’d Email” and “Cinnamon Waves” (which features DJ QBert and the record’s oddest moments) have the ‘80s/Prince vibe their titles suggest, while “My Opinion” (with Numskull of the Luniz), “Who’s Clean” and “Fear of a Mixed Planet” form a triad of racial observations as seen by the mixed-race Shock. *Jezebel Serwer*

SIFI GOD-GIVEN *BBE-Rapster/US/CD*

I’m gonna toss all the nu/neo/new prefixes and call this one simply a soul album. *God Given* is full of sweet harmonies and instantly memorable melodies all in service of Siji’s gorgeous tenor. Though his high ‘n’ tight vocal style recalls Al Green, Siji has written a thoroughly modern album, neither retro nor derivative. From sultry slow jams like “Heal” to loping mid-tempo gems like “Running Away,” *God-given* is a true gift of soul. *Peter Nicholson*

SLOWLY MINUTE TOMORROW WORLD *Bubblecore/US/CD*

However cliché this sounds, Takahiro Chiba makes music children would love. This is not a judgement. Like Lullatone, Minotaur Shock, Dorine Muraille and his countryman and Childisc label-owner Nobukazu Takemura, the 24-year-old Sapporo resident reapplies the gentle, dreamlike sounds we associate with childhood into a context of disorienting repetition and disarming naïveté. With acoustic guitar, laptop and a treasure chest of chiming samples, *Tomorrow World* is one of wozy charm. One that the parents of said children might do well to visit every now and again. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

STEREOTYP MEETS AL-HACA PHASE THREE *Klein/AUS/CD*

Austria’s Stereotyp and Germany’s Al-Haca Soundsystem have each fused dub and tech into a potent bass-heavy concoction on their debut albums *My Sound* and *Inevitable*, respectively. Having teamed up on two EPs this year as “Stereotyp Meets Al-Haca,” “Phase Three” completes the circle inna full-length mode. Complimented by some of reggae’s finest toasters such as Daddy Freddy, DJ Collage, RQM and Lady Saw, ragga is transported into the 21st century with nary a hint of remorse. “Next-level shit” aptly applies here, and should get subwoofers moving to dem boombastic beats. *Velanche*

TARENTEL WE MOVE THROUGH WEATHER BY THE END OF TONIGHT THE FIREWORKS ON ICE EP *Temporary Residence/US/CD*

My, my, how hard you (post) rock! While much of the instrumental rock crowd’s output dangerously veers into Tortoise-demos mediocrity, here things get really scary. Tarentel, always highly skilled at flaunting their delicate bits, with the addition of Sonna’s drummer here, provides a furiously beautiful setting for the broken flutes and thickly woven neon Afghans of perfected sound. By The End Of Tonight starts ever so ferociously, resolute in their desperate dash to make it to the finish line, never taking the time to smell the daisies. Like truckstop coffee, they wire your eyebrows to the top of your forehead. *Brian Paul*

TROUBLEMAN TIME OUT OF MIND *Far Out/UK/CD*

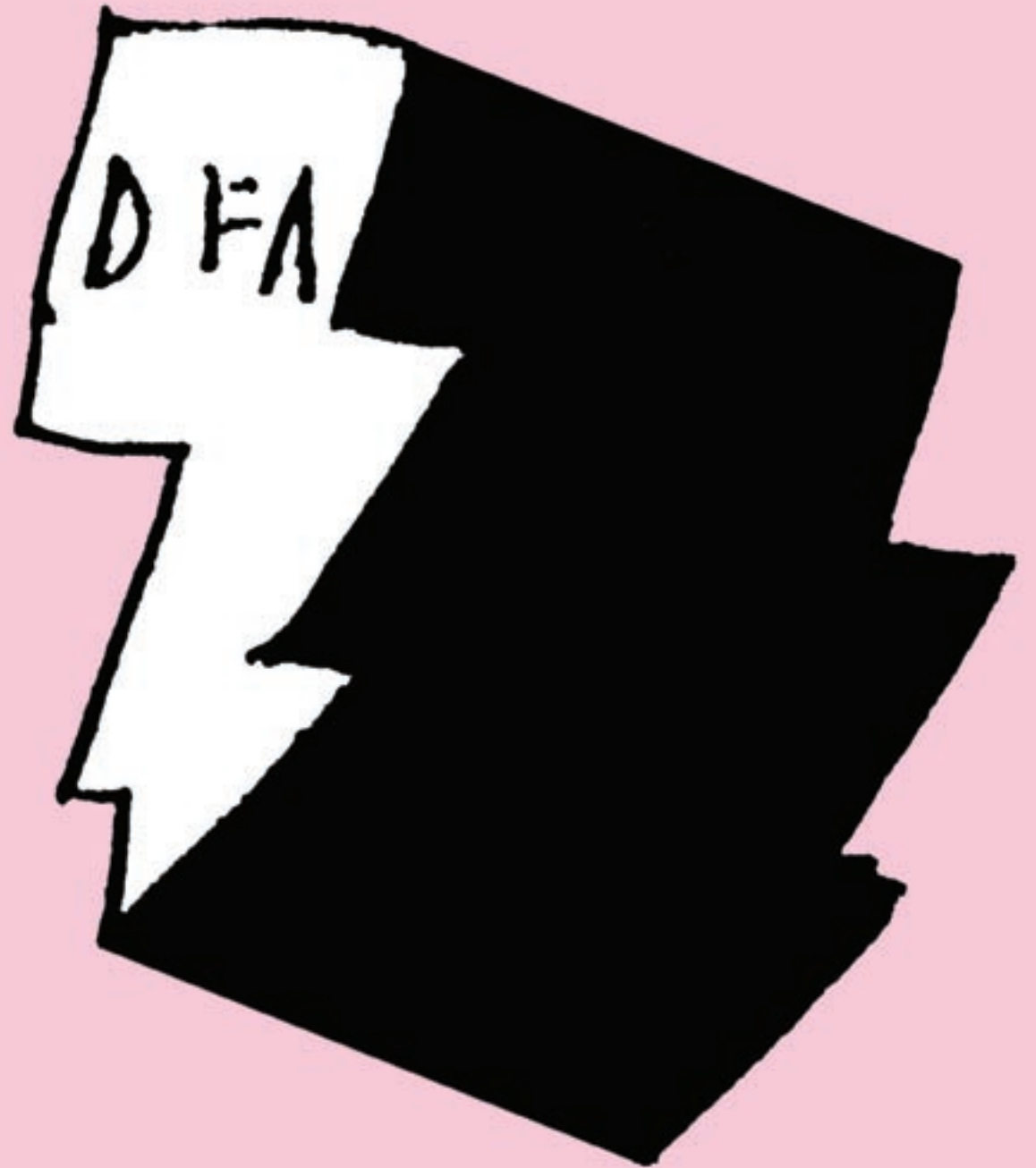
Mark Pritchard has beats. Figuring out what to do with them, though, sometimes challenges the UK producer. The grooves spread across *Time Out of Mind*—a collection spanning four years—range from downright nasty to monotonously downtrodden. When he lays down the funk-jazz (as in the killer opener “Have A Good Time”) or allows more breathing room in his rhythms (“Roll On” featuring the gorgeous vocals of Eska) the man is at top game. When he drops into café-lite bossa breaks, it goes nowhere. A nearly beautiful album too stuck in melancholic repetitiveness to matter. *Derek Berez*

VECTOR LOVERS *Soma/UK/CD*

Someone’s neon-rose plasma-screen robo-electro wet dream could be perfectly soundtracked by *Vector Lovers*. Musician Frankie Howerd, self-proclaimed “manga mad,” would surely approve of legions of delicately drawn perky booties getting it on to his light, bubbly tracks. It’s standard bright pink electro, the kind that’s obsessed with a fetishized vision of droids and Japan. I’m all for fantasizing, but I can’t help but wish that this particular musical fantasy were a little more inventive and twisted. The Robot Danceteria path is already well-trod. *Selena Hou*

OTTO VON SCHIRACH GLOBAL SPEAKER FISTING *Asphodel-Schematic/US/CD*

Leave it alone and let nature dispose of it. But life won’t be easier if noisecore toastmaster-general Otto Von Schirach is left undead to roam the earth, would it? *Global* is a spectacular bastardization of gangsta posturing and LP5-era Autechre’s Yellow # 5-sweetened discord. Such delinquency can pique nostalgia for the “lap-top-punk” Class of ‘01, but it now feels quaint. Yet Otto is still an agile entertainer with the bloated liver to prove it. “G4 Scramblin” pits muggers eyeing Steve Jobs’ latest model, while “Goat Sperm” is splattergore-metal on par with Mr. Bungle. Otto’s beat-crunching provides garlic-pill ecstasy in “Shine Yogurt” and “Iron Blood Saw.” Just quarantine *Global* and you’ll be safe. *Cameron Macdonald*

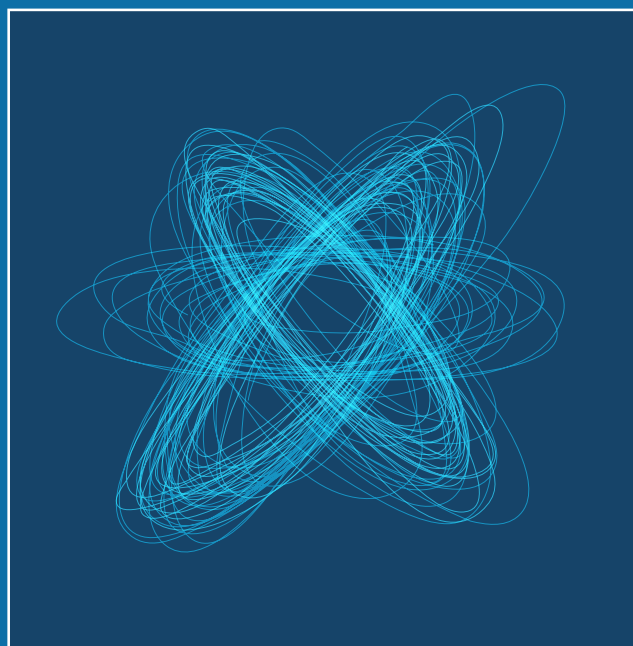


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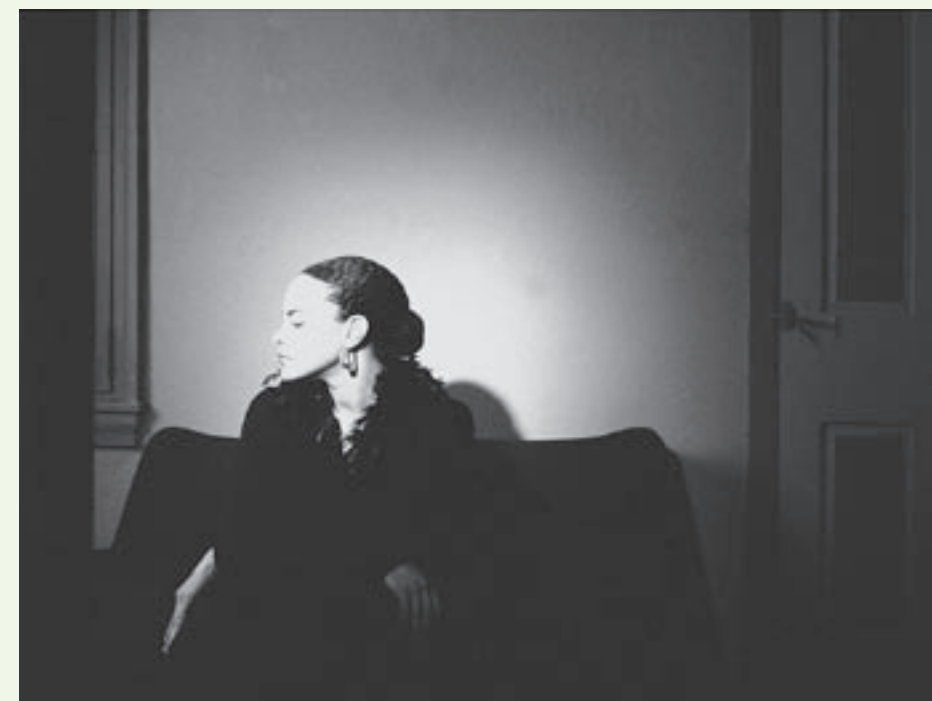


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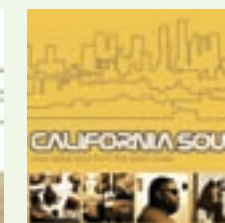
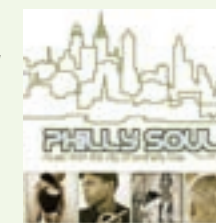
PHILLY SOUL 2: MUSIC FROM THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE

CALI SOUL: THE NEW WAVE OF SOUL FROM THE WEST COAST
Unisex/UK/CD

▲ **Ursula Rucker**

Since the glory days of legendary producers Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, Philadelphia's had a reputation as a city with soul. Several acts on *Philly Soul 2: Music From The City Of Brotherly Love* have collaborated over the years, adding authenticity to the city's familial sobriquet. Vivian Green, whose slow and sexy "Fanatic" sets off the album, got her big break as a backup singer for Jill Scott; Scott joins her trombonist Jeff Bradshaw on his solo single "Slide," a slinky go-go track under warm jazzy vocals; Bradshaw is the musical director for Floetry, the UK-to-Philly transplants who make an appearance with their plaintive minor hit "Say Yes." Jazzyfatnastees, who (along with half of the 215 area code) have worked with The Roots, offer the take-no-mess "All Up In My Face," and of course, The Roots themselves are here with "Pussy Galore." Legendary DJ King Britt (alongside Bahamadia) contributes the bouncy "Transcend." Philly studio god Larry Gold and Kindred The Family Soul deliver the epic "All That You Are," and it wouldn't be Philly without Jazzy Jeff. His "How I Do" with Boyz II Men's Shawn Stockman is from his 2002 LP *The Magnificent*, an incredible and oft-overlooked work with several modern soul masterpieces.

Philly is America's original capital city, so it gets respect like that, but thousands of miles away, the state of California, one of the youngest siblings in said family of states, has a soul of its own. The Golden State's soul scene has an impressive history, from rare sweetness and blazing funk to the more mainstream successes of East Bay acts like Sly And the Family Stone, En Vogue, Tony Toni Tone and The



Pointer Sisters. *Cali Soul* offers a taste of the emerging West Coast blend of rhythm, blues, hip-hop and soul. Seeing as this is the first time Unisex's Soul Series (all compiled by Adrian Gibson) has profiled a state and not a city, there are some notable omissions (Ledisi and Raphael Saadiq's solo work, to name two), but all in all, the Golden State is repped nicely.

Standouts on the comp include the sexiest song you've never heard: "Lay Me Down" by Will. I. Am of the Black Eyed Peas. The three-year-old B-side features the lush, vocoder-enhanced stylings of Terry Dexter; the horn swells and crisp snares pull you in close and hold you there. Oakland's Goapele offers up the intensely personal "Childhood Drama," which rides a reinterpretation of Herbie Hancock's classic "Watermelon Man" break, while Plantlife's "Beautiful Babies" comes off sounding like a cross between Andre 3000 and Earth Wind & Fire. Lucy Pearl (Dawn Robinson from En Vogue, Raphael Saadiq from Tony Toni Tone and Ali Shaheed Muhammed from A Tribe Called Quest) mix hip-hop beats with live guitars on "Don't Mess With My Man," and T-Love links with Detroit's Dwele on the lovely "Seven." California's soul scene is nowhere near as storied as Philly's, but as a wise man from Oakland once said, "You gotta get in where you fit in." *Ross Hogg*



INSTITUTO AND SABOTAGE

BRAZILIAN HIP HOP
World Music Network/UK/CD
PENTA BRASIL ELECTRONIC
ST2/BRA/CD

New-generation Brazilian music is a vibrant oeuvre when African and Latin rhythmic roots are matched with Portuguese lyricism on *Brazilian Hip Hop* and *Penta Brasil Electronic*, a double-CD tribute to the Brazilian national football team. *Brazilian Hip Hop* chronicles the rise of Brazilian rap from the early '80s in Thaide from DJ Hum's old school-sampled "Sr. Tempo Bom" to 509-E's gangsta style on "Saudades Mil." Elza Soares' samba-sung "Haiti" has a wicked bass drum and spine-tingling vocals. Mamelo Sound System's bangs dirty funk on "Gorilo Urbano." Soccer, a countrywide passion, inspired the ambitious *Penta Brasil* that has highs and lows in virtually every electronic style. Macumbalada brings hearty horns on "Samba do Morro" and Andre Andreo's "Costa Sul" sounds like Saturday night at a Sao Paulo disco. No need to understand Portuguese when flowing with Veiga & Salazar's "Brasliero" or Maracutaia's bossa nova-inflected instrumental. Brazilians are ballers indeed. *Tamara Warren*

AFRICAN UNDERGROUND VOL 1: HIP-HOP SENEGAL
Nomadic Wax/US/CD

DJs from LA to Bergen are championing this essential compilation, which radiates sinister undertones with its minor chords and muddled beats, and whose lyrics are swarming with political and social consciousness. Slam Revolution takes the police to task on "Begguma" while Yat Fu channels "Sunday Bloody Sunday" for its backing instrumentation on "Art Attendan." On the standout track "Shiffai," Shiffai ("the remedy" in Arabic) raps in a mix between Wolof (Senegal's national language) and English, and his laid-back beats and playful lyrics evoke something of a Senegalese Jay-Z. Senegal shows the rest of the world it's time to step up on this aggressively graceful CD. *Elka Karl*

ANTOLOGIA DE MUSICA ELECTRÓNICA PORTUGUESA
Plancton/POR/CD

This document of Portugal's electronic composites (oddly enough) parallels—aesthetically and chronologically—the establishment and resurgence of New York's no-wave movement led by experimental composites like Glenn Branca. Isabel Soveral's sonic shots of blips and bleeps are countered by the warm lulls of the duo Telectu and the naturalistic storm sounds of Emanuel Dimas de Melo Pimenta. This *antologia* captures Portugal's earliest experiments in sound (1972) as well as its most recent innovators (1997) and puts the country on the avant-garde map. *Carla Coata*

ASTHMATIC KITTY/SOUNDS ARE ACTIVE 2004 SAMPLER
Asthmatic Kitty—Sounds Are Active/US/CD
MARZO Soundsister/MEX/CD

Proving that sisterhood is powerful, sibling labels Sounds Are Active and Asthmatic Kitty cram a grab bag of sounds—everything from hip-hop to free jazz to folk weirdness—onto one sampler. Liz Janes makes the word "guitar" sound profound and Half-Handed Cloud constructs a polyphonic spree of a sound without all those pesky robes. While most of these have been heard before, the Sounds Are Active half of the album buzzes with new tracks from Soul-Junk, Bizzart, Vla Hemia and others. Meanwhile, the Soundsister label emerges from internet etherality with its first CD, *Marzo*, whose uniform video game bleepiness confirms that sometimes variety isn't the spice of life. Gin Shaker Yodex gets all playful on "dias de sol" while the vocal track on Carrie's "sounds like display" adds some well-deserved humanity to Soundsister's brave robotic world. *Elka Karl*

GILLES PETERSON: IN BRAZIL
Ether/US/2CD

Swiss precision runs hot as Gilles Peterson trumpets old and nu-skool Brazilian music. The first disc, *Clássico*, hits seminal '70s with "Black Rio" funk fixture Wilson Simonal, Golden Boys yummiy twanging-up Baden Powell and Vinicius De Moraes, and Mario Castro Neves and Samba SA samba-ing our asses. Djavan's lusciously ubiquitous summer anthem "Serrado" bubbles and Sergio Mendes and Brasil '77 still do it in '04. Disc two, *Da Hora*, heads lovingly DL with non-Brazilians alike, like UK breakbeat mistress Patricia Marx and 4Hero, and London's Spiritual South. Delectable slo-mode remixing of Milton Nascimento percolates, and Brazilian nu-jazzer Bruno E. (Marx's hubby) ekes out da juice. Floor-filling! *Stacy Meyn*

MAD GUITAR SCOOBAY SUMMER BOUNCE
Greensleeves/UK/CD

Greensleeves highlights three riddims that have been heatin' up dances in Jamaica for months. Donovan "Vendetta" Bennett's pulsating Mad Guitar clocks in at 118 bpm and features a standout cut from Leftside and Esco's "Passa Passa Pt. 2," complete with impersonations of dancehall's top acts. At

126 bpm and complete with steel drums, Gadaffi's Summer Bounce is the fastest of the three and a further flirtation between dancehall and soca. But the summer belongs to Tony Matterhorn and Mario C's incredibly infectious Scoobay. At 117 bpm, the riddim is best suited to singers; fittingly, crooner Tony Curtis alongside MC Future Troubles rule the dance with the "Scoobay Anthem." *Ross Hogg*

DJ WARRIOR AND OUTLAWZ: OUTLAW WARRIORZ
DJ STRONG: PALM TREES AND GANGSTAS
Strong House/US/CD
DEMOLITION MEN: IT'S CURTAINS
Bay Area Mix Tape Kings/US/CD

Historically, the West Coast mixtape scene has been a step behind its East Coast counterpart, lacking the infrastructure and audience to produce such breakthrough artists as 50 Cent and Saigon. A new slew of mixtapes are helping to change all that. LA's self-proclaimed Mixtape King DJ Warrior provides an overview of Tupac-spinoff group The Outlawz on *Outlaw Warriorz*, while DJ Strong's *Palm Trees and Gangstas* and Oakland, CA's Demolition Men's *It's Curtains* focus on a steady slew of freestyles and mixtape exclusives. Highlights from the crunk-tinged *It's Curtains* include an unlikely duo between Talib Kweli and E-40 as well as a series of exclusives from Bay Area MCs Balance and San Quinn, whereas *Palm Trees and Gangstas* gives us the latest bangers from Yukmouth, Crooked I and Kurupt. While the left coast is still a couple years behind the rotten apple, tapes such as these are forcing listeners to take notice. *Sam Chennault*

HITEK BY METEOSOUND
Meteosound/GER/CD

Meteosound equals clicks 'n' cuts production techniques applied to hip-hop and dub rhythm matrices. The 14 acts on *Hitek By Meteosound* apply fresh coats of sonic paint to houses showing wear and tear. Artists like Dabrye, Headset, Apparat (remixed by Monolake) and Andreas Tilliander engage in digital skullduggery with hip-hop's roots, and the DNA-tampering results in much tantalizing music. Dub-oriented cuts by Bus and Fenin dip into innocuousness, but they're the exception. More typical of *Hitek* is Thomas Fehlmann's sparse, processional ambient dub that's suffused in funereal ambience, spotlighting a compelling tension between heaviness and lightness. *Dave Segal*

INSPIRACIÓN—ESPIRACIÓN: GOTAN PROJECT DJ SET
XL/US/CD

Philippe Cohen Solal hears a groove as a groove, whether it's a '40s groove, a '70s groove or a modern groove. The French composer behind Gotan Project tests his theory and bridges the time gap by culling jazz, tango, folk, dub and hip-hop united by the sexy, nostalgic mystique of tango's squeezebox, the *bandoneon*. An untouched work by '70s tango master Astor Piazzolla makes a good starting point. Then Peter Kruder, Anti-Pop Consortium and Pepe Bradock remix Gotan's world-famous musical cocktails, while the Gotan team takes on Chet Baker and Peace Orchestra. Think soundtrack, not muzak. *Liz Cordingley*

METALHEADZ: MDZ 04
Metalheadz/UK/CD

Known for raw energy, uncompromising edge and the skull head that's become iconographic in drum & bass, the 10-year-old label is back with another collection of dancefloor goodies. Highly noteworthy on this compilation are Photek's haunting, complex "Age of Empire" and the eclectic beats and twists on John Rolodex & Synoflex's "Novocain." These two gems are supported by a foundation of fierce breaks and aggressive basslines that hold the remaining tracks together in a solid structure. Sadly the disc is unmixed, but it's nonetheless going to be a definite staple for any head. *Jenn Marston*

MR. SCRUFF: KEEP IT SOLID STEEL VOL. 1
Ninja Tune/UK/CD
J BOOGIE'S DUBTRONIC SCIENCE: LIVE IN THE MIX
Om/US/CD

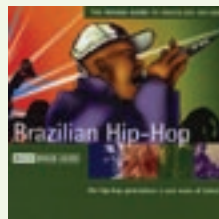
With so much good music lurking beneath the fringes, it's downright delightful to happen upon an adept DJs' solid selections. J Boogie and Mr. Scruff share a common ear for quality, teasing with hip hop, dub and soothing soul. J Boogie's journey starts off cool-cat with his five-piece band's grooves and moves through the sonic landscape of Talib Kweli's hip-hop swing to Zion's forceful anti-Bush lyrics on "You're the Murderer" and Goapele's sultry "Try Me." While Mr. Scruff also touches on heart vessels, he keeps it fast and furious UK style with 31 tracks, including Sarah Winton, Prefuse 73 and Erykah Badu. He dips deep into hip-hop lore with Lords of the Underground's "Check It" and ties it off with Pharoah Sanders "You've Got to Have Freedom." These are proper mixes for improper times. *Tamara Warren*



BABY MAMMOTH, BEIGE AND SOLID DOCTOR

FABRIC 18: BABY MAMMOTH, BEIGE AND SOLID DOCTOR
Fabric/UK/CD

Throwing conventional beats to the wall, Pork Recordings artists Baby Mammoth, Beige and Solid Doctor pool their collective oddball-ness to form this delightful confection of a compilation. A bit leftfield, a bit nuts, a bit retro-cheesy at points, sure, but the trio execute this in their characteristically ironic, tongue-in-cheek way. Though the tracklisting is confined mainly to Baby Mammoth and Momma Gravy tunes with a handful of songs from fellow Hullsters Fila Brazillia's Twentythree Records, pulsating tribal house, grinding electro, sinuous breaks and sharp funk collide in a whirlwind of electronic sound, making this a compelling, thoroughly enjoyable and undoubtedly memorable listen. *Christine Hsieh*





RARITIES AND B-SIDES
QUEER TRAX
SCREAMIN' RACHEL: EXTACY
 Trax/US/CD

Looks like Trax had a bit of house cleaning and decided to re-release everything they found. Lucky us (for the most part) because classic cuts like Robert Owens' "Bring Down the Walls" or the more obscure "Zig Zag" by Chunk-A-Bud provide a heady "back in the day" rush for old-timers while schooling some of the youngsters as to how technology don't mean dick when it comes to dancing. Trax president Screamin' Rachel's new work isn't exactly stellar, but who really cares when she's making the right calls like honoring the support gay clubs gave house with a comp like *Queer Trax*.
Peter Nicholson

SHAWN LEE'S PING PONG ORCHESTRA: MUSIC AND RHYTHM
 Ubiquity/US/CD
BACK TO LIFE: MIO 2004 SAMPLER
 Mio/US/CD

The funk break beat was originally characterized as the golden "whatthefuckwasthat?" moment in a hip-hop track to put b-boys and dusty soul collectors alike off-guard. These two comps loosely partake in that good faith. *Ping Pong* curator Shawn Lee stitches together a motley collection of studio-musician grooves that center on the "Funky Drummer" period that has thankfully not been stripped and pasteurized into clichés. The Mio label will bewilder you with its abridged label sampler of prog-rock gems that noodle away and stuff their mouths with pleasantly convoluted rhythms. DJs could find some use for *Back to Life* when the dancefloor is lonely and the ennuï sets in.
Cameron Macdonald

TECHNO DIVISION VOL. 4: MIXED BY CHRIS LIEBING
 U60311/GER/2CD

This double-disc mix from a most proficient techno turntablist rouses quite a squall, especially on disc two, which reminisces the deeply beatless yet unrelenting uteri pound of a Jeff Mills track: bottomless, rich, textured, ingressive. The proponents of overly proscribed minimalism that currently holds court over listeners and critics could learn a great deal from the acutely improvisational techniques of these pulsating oscillators. Track selections include Wink, Villalobos, Liebing and Dear, and all are perfectly subterranean.
J.David Marston

TRANSATLANTIC BASS: THE MUTATED SOUND OF AMERICAN BREAKBEAT & GARAGE
 Urban Renewal/US/CD

Tough, heavy and deep—apparently, this is what makes breakbeat and garage distinctly American. Forget the fluffy, poppy two-step from the UK—this first release from the Urban Renewal label gathers only the dark stuff from around the country (and one from our friendly neighbors up north), the stuff more influenced by the likes of gritty acts like Zed Bias and Stanton Warriors than pop-garage wannabes Trusteppers featuring Victoria Beckham. All densely packed layers of bass, complicated breaks and sharp snares, *Transatlantic Bass* is nicely mixed by DJ Cooper, who maintains the album's raw, gritty feel throughout.
Christine Hoieh

TWILIGHT CIRCUS DUB SOUNDSYSTEM REMIXED: DUBWISE
 M/NETH/CD

Truly great dub highlights sonic elements you may have missed in the original mix, giving the tune an all-new feel. Twilight Circus release their reels to heavyweight producers and, in return, receive modern masterpieces. While Vibronics, Disciples, Mad Professor and Manasseh offer more traditional treatments, G-Corp changes half-time to double-time behind Big Youth on "Love Is What We Need" and Rob Smith does the same on "No Burial," giving Michael Rose's plaintive wail a lively up-tempo backdrop. But the real stand-out is Zion Train's digital roots dub of "What We Got To Do" that takes the original to stellar heights.
Ross Hoag



DJ 3000

DJ 3000: TRUE COLORS
 Submerge/US/CD

Bearing the address of the hallowed new Submerge headquarters as his DJ moniker, Franki Juncaj builds a rock-solid, nicely mortared mix out of its latest catalog. Drawing inspiration from the densely packed and multihued Hamtramck (one of the two smaller cities within Detroit's borders) and his own Albanian heritage, Juncaj brings techno, electronic soul and funk together like a downtown cultural festival. *True Colors* also showcases cuts from Pittsburgh's Technoir crew, Fabrice Lig and Juncaj's own Motech Records, and even coaxes surprises out of the booty-shakin' Electrofunk label, such as Electric Soul's politically-charged "Stereotype." Not wanting to lean on any clichés himself, DJ 3000 shows that, even in techno, it's not all black and white, city and suburb, minimal and melodic. Throughout its hour of driving, floor-filling fare, *True Colors* portrays Detroit in the multidimensional light it deserves.
Dan Sicks



Monday

SPECTACLE: Event
 Karaoke

when: Mon 7.25 (9pm-2am)
 where: Sing Sing (81 Ave A)
 (212.647.0700)
 price: \$35/hr
 links: [Event Info](#)

Starting at nine, lock yourself in for a night at Sing Sing. Rent a soundproof room with your friends and be as obnoxious as you like without getting pulled offstage; you can even shed your shirt and no one will call the cops. Then, at midnight belly up to the bar where every song will win you a drink, complete with a well-buzzed audience. - God help your neighbors.
 It's difficult to determine who'll appreciate the soundproof room more — you or your fellow patrons.

Even by New York standards, what's the most outrageous song you've ever heard someone sing? Our favorite answer wins one free hour of karaoke to top

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HOUSE GUEST REVIEWS:
LOSOU

Who knew that German techno would be just the thing to revitalize the house scene? Peter Kremeier, apparently. Under the guise Losoul, this Teutonic timekeeper has revitalized 4/4 with feverish techno kicks and minimal grit—no big surprise from this fan of Chicago’s jackin’ house sound. He originally purveyed nasty electro punk on 2000’s “Lies (Watch Your Lift),” but settled down into a dirty metronomic funk for that same year’s debut album, *Belong* (both on the Playhouse label). In September, he released his sophomore record—a classy, well-thought out thumper that goes by the name *Getting Even*. Here, Kremeier gives us an esoterically written guide to his top three tracks of the month. *Julian Schumacher*
www.ongaku.de

AYBEE DEEPBLAK'D Prescription/US/12

As a keen house listener and a DJ in the '90s this record gives me two sensations. First, it's the comeback of Chicago's legendary Prescription label from Chicago, with Ron Trent appearing as executive producer. Second, it has a political thread as it juxtaposes sampling generations, pairing sounds from P  p   Bradock's "Deep Burnt" with a Martin Luther King-like speech. A great moment in deep house. *PK*

CUT COPY FUTURE RMXS Kitsune/US/12

Kitsune has gone the smart way with these Cut Copy remixes—and quick! Chromeo, Zongamin and !!! deliver cool, up-to-date versions, but I usually play Zongamin, 'cause it's the first track. Don't ask me why. *PK*

REVERSO 68 PIECE TOGETHER Specialist Interests/UK/12

Between fragments of a lost period of Balearic electro-pop, there's still movement and a slow-motion atmosphere surrounds us. These are the last warm days this year. Even at night or in the clubs, we'll never be as cool as the Italo-disco jocks, but when we put this record on we don't really care. *PK*



MICHOACAN 2 BULLETS
Grayhound/US/12

New talent Fernando Miranda Rios from the rough enclave of East Palo Alto, CA, shines on an '80s synth number (reminds me of Yello, Stranglers and YMO!) saturated by enough cowbells and handclaps so as to fit perfectly next to tracks by !!! or LCD Soundsystem. *H-O-T*. Also on Grayhound, Charles Spencer—a vastly underrated SF producer who's as dope as Migs, Maeda or any of 'em—gives us the "Carlton Hotel" EP featuring rattling roto-toms and intoxicating synth bass stabs. *Roman Cardenas*

FUNK D'VOID
CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF A BAD THING
Soma/SCOT/12

The moody sound of Detroit techno is never too far away from the music of Scotland's Funk D'Void (Lars Sandberg). His latest, "Can't Get Enough Of A Bad Thing," from the full-length *Volume Freak*, is deliciously soulful tech-house. Featuring the soulful vocals of Blakkat (Mark Bell), "Can't Get Enough" is a rock-solid dancefloor filler, especially the crisply minimal Steve Bug Vocal Remix. *Tim Pratt*

LARS BEHRENROTH ELECTION
Auris/GER/12

On a German label fast becoming synonymous with wee-hours subterranean house emerges XM satellite radio DJ LB (Chez, Compost) with the balmy, slowly developing "Election," a track to place in the mix next to Pepe Braddock's classic "Burning." Perfect

for fans of sparse, melodic instrumental house. Equally intriguing is Auris's Parov Stelar. "Primavera"’s dub throb rests on the faintest of synth pad touches, which gently bellow outward like an unfolding parachute. Worth the jump. *Tomas*

MANY SHADES OF HOUSE EP
Nordic Trax/US/12

Vancouver's Nordic Trax label is known for its consistency, releasing a wide array of deep yet driving funky and techy house. This three-track EP excerpts offerings from Luke McKeehan's mix CD of the same name, highlighted by the blissful, deep French-style house of I'Shead's "Sincerement," though my money is on Kelvin K & Jon Gray's heady, atmospheric "13th Parallel," with its trippy groove. *Tim Pratt*

LOPAZZ MIGRACION REMIXES
Get Physical/GER/12

Lopazz, Luciano and Ricardo Villalobos—Euope's most whispered about off-kilter, minimal and tech-house producers—team up for a set of challenging, unconventional remixes, featuring sounds and rhythms as gritty and shifting as Sahara sands. Like Stravinsky before them, Villalobos and Luciano embrace atonality—a fittingly sober counterpart for a song about leaving one's homeland behind. *Teri Tone*

LOOSEFINGERS WHEN SUMMER COMES
Alleviated/US/12

Larry "Mr. Fingers" Heard's latest single arrives on Trackmode Records affiliate label Alleviated, and again the Chicago veteran bucks the trends. "When Summer Comes" is a sultry, slowed-down soul house song complete with easy vocals, a nice chorus and sax soloing. Two clever acid productions on the flip round things out. *Derek Grey*

CHEZ DAMIER YOUR LOVE (THE REMIXES)
Trackmode/US/12+7

On this 12", plus a bonus 7" single, original house architect Chez Damier's R&B vocal gem "Your Love" gets reworked by Italy's Harley & Muscle (as cool and smooth as *limon* gelato) and the talented DJ Ali (a shuffling, sax-laden mix). Damier's recent 10" single titled "The Gathering" on France's Atal features The Cru and Ron Trent exploring jazzy flute-drenched vocals and dark staccato dancefloor business. *Hector Cedillo*

BROADWAY AND WILSON
BROADWAY AND WILSON EP
Gallery/US/12

JT Donaldson and Tim Shumaker's label is on their ninth excellent release. B&W, a collaboration between Andrew Emil (Seasons) and Jeff Bloom (Play, Farris Wheel), brings chopped, lo-fi samples and taut rhythms, which inspire that hand-in-the-air, wave-to-the-giraffes dance. Imbued with a Parisian frivolity, these urban jazzy jams totally swing. Similarly lively is Swirl Peepz "Lotta Fun" (Odds and Ends)—imagine P-Funk gone house. *Roman Cardenas*

STRANGER AND CAPT. DELICIOUS
TEA AND ANTI-DEPRESSANTS
Rong/US/12

The tea and antidepressants keep Stranger and Capt Delicious' retro-house sedate but alert as analog synth riffs swirl about their heads amid a rocky road mix of vintage drum machine percussion and funk break drum patterns. One to play at 4 a.m. when you're trying to make it with that gorgeous hippie raver sprawled out on the beanbag chair. On Rong's offshoot label Tape, Chicago's Mystic Bill's "Right Step" EP revels in tracky beats and pumping disco loops. A killer mystic brew. *Tomas*



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**TECHNO GUEST
REVIEWS:
GRINGO GRINDER**



True or false: Techno is known for many things, but a sense of humor isn't among them. False...at least when Sheldon Thompson's involved. Something wild must have happened to make this former stockbroker desert the trading floor for the dancefloor but thank god it did. These days, Thompson trades in healthy kickdrums, tongue-in-cheek snares and sex-laden techno bass. He's known under a variety of aliases, from the rather staid and minimal work as Pan/tono to his pumping jams as Gringo Grinder, whose recent album, *Breakfast Included* (Onitor), has an ode to bacon that we especially love. Thompson drops a record of hedonist schaffel this fall under the moniker Sid Le Rock. In the meantime, here's what this gringo is grinding to this month. *Vivian Hoat*

LAWRENCE LAWRENCE & FRIENDS Dial 21/GER/12

An emotional mélange of string melodies and basslines that complete the soul. Very atmospheric, like all the Lawrence stuff. The remixes by Audision and James Dina4 bring back the beat in the game—one's straight, one has a weird, experimental hip-hop theme. *ST*

JUSTUS KÖHNCKE SOFORT Speicher/GER/12

Justus Köhncke's "Sofort" is the A-side, but the Koze track, "Brutalga Square," is what makes this record. It starts off in a slow manner, but after a few bars of repetitiveness (essential for the average DJ), it leads us to a grander surprise. Here, we find that patience is a virtue, as it slowly builds into very driving electro. The perfect track to get the crowd in motion. *ST*

DIEBSTAHL WALK IDIOT WALK Glanzbild/GER/12

Diebstahl hits the brown star, seriously. As I'm living in Germany now, I can give you some language lessons. Diebstahl means to steal from somebody, and guess whose soul they stole? It's The Hives. They are top balls in my view, so whatever foolish person decides to make a bootleg of them can do no wrong. *ST*

AKUFEN FORCEPT 1 REINTERPRETATIONS Minus/US/12

Taking elements from Richie Hawtin's groundbreaking *Concept 1* series released in 1996 (releasing one 12" per month using a specific selection of sound sources) and reshuffling the bits and pieces, Montreal's chop-mastering producer Akufen gives his fragmented take on the influential series—a perfect match. Meanwhile, Ricardo Villalobos' epic 15-minute remix of DJ Minx's "A Walk In The Park" (Minus) adds a sinewy vocal atop the driving yet sensual production. *Tim Pratt*

ERIC SNEO BRAINHAMMER EP Clr/GER/12

Chris Liebing's imprint continues to install more relentless mayhem, this time with the debut of fellow German, Eric Sneo. This clanky metallic vinyl powerhouse emits a quick rush to the melody, while steadily invasive percussive hits creep from the rear. In the mix or alone, consider this release a useful addition. *Praxis*

I-ROBOTS THIRD MILLENNIUM Elettrica/ITA/12

I-Robots' (Italy's Gianluca Pandullo) second volume of swirling, synthesizer-laden Italian disco is a great mixture of old and new electro, reinterpreting '80s-era tracks such as Charlie's 1983 gem "Spacer Woman." The key track here is Oxtongue's (Kompakt) remix with snappy elec-

tro beats criss-crossing turgid, shimmering synths with a pulsing bassline and treated vocals. *Tim Pratt*

DUBLONER DEVIIOUS TURNIP EP Headinghome/US/12

Ken Gibson, best known as Eight Frozen Modules, least known as The Premature Wig, serves up some of the most inventive, enjoyable tech-house heard this side of Cologne. What the titles "Blurry Udder" and "Wrapper Turnip" have to do with anything is anyone's guess. But there isn't a dud in the bunch. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

DRAMA SOCIETY CRYING HERO Turbo/CAN/12

This Italian duo brings a moody array of taunting synths embedded in the mix, an epic hook marches fierce out in front that's sure to make even the snobbiest audience hum. *Praxis*

SIEG UBER DIE SONNE LOVE IS OK MultiColor/GER/12

Sieg Uber Die Sonne return with the haunting "Love Is OK," featuring remixes by Ricardo Villalobos and Tobi Neumann. Villalobos' hypnotizing, churning mix isn't mindblowing, but a nice minimal groove and crackly textures keep the track moving. Neumann's mix also accents his minimal approach with chopped up vocals underneath a striking but subtle Indian percussion motif. *Tim Pratt*

**2-STEP GUEST
REVIEWS:
JASON MUNDO**



J.R. Ewing. Jack Ruby. Troy Aikman. Jason Mundo—all names that have put Dallas, Texas, on the map. But let's talk more about Mundo, a longtime drum & bass fixture who really hit his stride when he started pioneering the 2-step/UK garage sound in the United States. He began by starting up a Sunday night party at Groovology, bringing in big names such as Zed Bias and MJ Cole. More recently, his production talents have landed him a place in Jon E Cash's tough-as-nails crew Black Ops, with whom he recently played at London's Club Liberty. You can catch Mundo's latest productions, "Swing It Brother" and "I Stand Rasta Remix," on the *Transatlantic Bass* compilation, and he's an organizer of the US's first Garage Conference, which was held over Labor Day weekend this year. Here are his picks for the most sizzling 4/4 UK garage numbers of now. *Star Eyes*

TUBBY T READY SHE READY (QUALIFIDE RMX) white/UK/12

England's heaviest reggae tune of the year gets the 4x4 UKG remix treatment from Qualifide and it's an automatic rewind. Qualifide lets the full vocal shine through the mix while his bumpy 4x4 beats drive the tune in the background. The remix, and its recent BBC heavy rotation, show once again that Tubby T's voice crosses over to all crowds. *JM*

DYNAMITE MC CHOICES Strong/UK/12

Look! A 2-step track that even hardcore junglists will dance to! Dynamite MC flows over this Wookie-produced gem with its bubbly vocal and irresistible chords. This is part of the four-track "Room 2" EP that also includes the anthem "Rush the DJ" (produced by TNT) and the Zinc-produced "Topped Up." Sure to usher in a 2-step revival in the coming months. *JM*

DANNY C & HUX FEAT. OGGIE FOLLOW ME A.I.M./UK/12

The Aly-Us classic gets re-created at 135 bpm. Oggie's amazing vocal sounds *exactly* like the original, and the song sticks with the winning structure and melody that made this an anthem in the first place. Watch your "house friends" sing, dance and cheer! *JM*

CUT & RUN white/UK/12

Must-have nu-skoool breaks remixes of pop-rap Americans Twista and Ludacris that will have dancefloors in serious Deekline (hint, hint). Both tracks are so well produced, hooky and familiar that I doubt the artists being flipped will be mad at this. Electro synth lines and dub keyboard stabs make for a romp that Afrika Bambaataa or Smith & Mighty would probably rock at peak hour. Fire, fire! *Tomas*

LOEF AH JUNGLE INFILTRATOR Big Apple/UK/12

Loefah strips four dubstep tracks down to their bass-heavy shorts, with only a few handclaps and eastern flute samples to cover themselves. "Jazz Lick" rumbles like a warehouse's zinc-walls outside a garage rave, rattling from the enormous speaker stacks within. Dark, cerebral ragga-dance 'ta mek ya bubble 'an wine. *Doubter*

DAVINCHE EYES ON U white/UK/12

Davinche's beats always sound better with MCs or singers on top; their stripped down Triton Workstation tones are too tacky on their own, with baroque strings fidgeting over clicky-clacky drum patterns. But with a human voice on top they become fully realized micro-symphonies, like a pairing of G-Unit and Dillinja. Beware his tune's sharp hooks; they'll snag any of us unsuspecting cod. *Tomas*

MOVING NINJA WITCHDOKTA Vertical Sound/UK/12

Moving Ninja is Australia's DJ Farj and Jabba, founders of the Garage Pressure website. Their tribal clay pot percussion and thick, tropical forest synth atmospheres on "Witchdokka" make for a hell of a break/dubstep hybrid. The 30Hz remix is a UK-centric mix that'll please fans of Zinc's crisp, funky snares and lashing, distorted, bass ligaments. Top shotta. *Doubter*

FEROCIOUS MULLET AUTOLOAD Chi/UK/12

Charlie Norton and Gareth Green, psy-trance exiles from London, return from the success of their single "Cellophane Satisfaction" with another huge slice of breakbeat stomp. With drums that stutter and march while staying steady enough to keep your audience in the groove, the Mullet boys add sweeping bass notes, subtle live elements and robotic voice samples. Also check Chi's new "Cinetrip Workshop" EP—tight stuff. *Derek Grey*

SLAUGHTER MOB L'AMOUR Hot Flush/UK/12

The bass on "L'Amour" wraps around your body like an anaconda, dragging you into its sinister quicksand. "Guns N Bones" is the soundtrack to a 22nd-century drive-by laser blasting. The metallic drum beats cock back and then thrust forward at warp speed; it'll make your knees buckle. *DJ TruNites*



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**DRUM & BASS GUEST
REVIEWS: GRIDLOCK**

Looking at Ryan Powell's discography will make your eyes swim. One of the most prolific producers currently sailing the choppy seas of drum & bass, San Francisco-based Powell has released 36 original tracks under the name Gridlok since 2000—that's a 12" nearly every two months. As such, Gridlok's name has become synonymous with tough, driving beats and intensely technical production—not to mention keeping the dancefloor happy. When Powell's not working on his own label, Project 51, or repping Hive's Violence imprint, he's busy remixing—look out for upcoming versions for C4C and Fierce (Quarantine), Swift (Charge) and The Militia (Renegade Hardware). Powell's also ramping up Project 51's releases—stay tuned for forthcoming collaborations with Hive, Optiv and Keaton, and peep his list of the hottest new tunes in drum & bass. *Star Eyes*

HIVE KRUSH Metalheadz/UK/12

It was inevitable that Hive would have a release on Metalheadz. But the results are much more than expected: two timeless pieces that stretch out in different, but equally substantial, directions. "Krush" is an all-out dancefloor smasher with loads of tension building throughout—this track smacks you around! Flip for "Against the Grain," which can be summed up in one word: deep. A great contrast of sounds equals a must-own 'Headz release. *RP*

NOISIA HUBCAP Subtitles/NOR/12

These three lads from Gronigen (in northern Holland) are coming with a sound that has been seldom done properly since Konflikt went on hiatus. Their debut for Teebee's Subtitles aims to please with tight, minimal production and plenty of dark atmosphere. But it's all about the flip, "Backdraft," which is dark and running but also has something often lacking in most tunes of this style: funk. *RP*

DBRIDGE & CONCORD DAWN LABRYNTH Exit Versus/UK/12

Three distinctly different artists share this special 12", released on a limited edition offshoot of Exit Recordings (the new label from Bad Company's D-Bridge). Concord Dawn joins D-Bridge for the rolling, 808-flavored "Labyrinth"; this tune is infectious—it might not grab you on first listen but it grows and grows until you fall in love with it. On the B-side, D-Bridge joins up with Fierce for the unexpected—"Daylight" is pure summertime vibes. *RP*

AMIT GATECRASHER Metalheadz/UK/12

With a superb intro melody, "Gatecrasher" creeps in on a half-time groove. Organic vibes unfold as horns weave between heavy dub bass and rave atmospherics. Amit's signature style goes in deeper on the flip. "Pirates" rocks an unconventional break but still drips enough dub to see the rudebwoys slap down the walls. *4Real*

SILENT WITNESS & BREAK DIALING OUT Critical/UK/12

"Dialing Out" champions the Jamaican-sample lifting rub-a-dub style of late, interjecting uplifting horn echoes that roll into bass-heavy movements, topped off with sporadic dial button samples. Check the versatility of "Godpad" on the flip, a techy mechanical funk rocks via tough-edged beats. More quality from a label that can't be pigeonholed. *Ryan Romana*

MAMPI SWIFT & BLAME SLEEPWALKER Charge/UK/12

Gotta give it up to the pros! When vet junglists like Blame and Mampi decide to bring some hard-edged, forceful-but-funky drum & bass, no one can stand in the way. Thankfully, both know the musical science of aligning creative ambient build-ups, spacey sounds and samples with switchblade-sharp drum programming. And if you want more Blame, grab his phenomenal new single "Burnout" on Metalheadz for more epic sounds. *Doubtaz*

DEEP BLUE SOHO CODE Offshore/US/12

Hail the return of Moving Shadow legend Sean O'Keefe (2 Bad Mice), who delivers new tracks that balance hard and smooth d&b tactics like so few can these days. With stylish ambient pads, up-down elevator bass sweeps and plenty of intricate sounds pinballing through the mix, "Soho Code" should go places. Producer Spirit adds a nice sharp angle to drums of "Coral" on the flip. Essential. *Tomas*

SIMON BASSLINE SMITH + DRUMSOUND HUMANOID Timeless/UK/12

Two awesome production duos showcase some of their finest abilities on the latest Timeless 12". First, "Humanoid" bounces in with a punchy grind bassline accented by eerie howls and oscillating midrange noises. Female and robotic vox balance out the tune, making it appropriate for more than one kind of dancefloor. On the flip, Digital & Spirit have resurrected their classic "Remote Control" under their Phantom Audio guise, adding extra rave flavor and perfect amen fills. *4Real*

PACIFIC AUTOFUNK Rehab/US/12

Rehab Music, uncommonly based out of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, whips up some next generation neuro-funk from the prolific Vancouverite known as Pacific. "Autofunk" rolls effortlessly through moody synths, saucy licks and pulsing bass leading into an overall gritty funk-ed out experience that will appeal to any Virus aficionado. Love it! *Ryan Romana*



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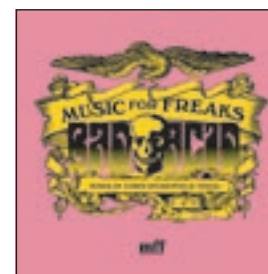


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HIP HOP LABEL PROFILE: RHYMESAYERS



Minnesota conjures up images of harsh winters and the world's biggest mall, but for legions of indie rap fans it is the birthplace of acts like Atmosphere, Brother Ali and Eyedea and Abilities, and the location of Rhymesayers Entertainment, a hometown crew that's become a household name.

Sean "Slug" Daley of Atmosphere and high school homies Brent "Abu Siddiq" Sayers and Derek "Spawn" Turner founded Rhymesayers in 1993 as a vehicle to showcase their own work and that of Minneapolis peers like Los Nativos, Musab and Micranots. It fostered a close-knit group of musicians with a penchant for lyrical prowess and deeply personal, often confessional songwriting. "Ant and Slug and Siddiq and many of the artists are like brothers to me," explains Brother Ali. Slug adds, "Our ties to our artists feel very family-orientated. It's co-op-ish, honestly."

Rhymesayers set up headquarters at Minneapolis' Fifth Element shop and began reaching outside of the city for talent, releasing albums by Murs of Living Legends, MF Doom and Soul Position.

When the major labels came knockin', Atmosphere turned down several deals in favor of a partnership with indie giant Epitaph. The deal gave Rhymesayers artists creative freedom and financial control, and allowed them to traverse the country on the Warped Tour. Currently, they move 100,000 units and get play on MTV2. Still, the crew remains true to the DIY ethic. Slug sums it up: "Our sound is honesty, purpose and passion." *DJ Anna* www.rhymesayers.com

PRESTO AND LOWD BACK IN 92 Puma Strut/UK/12

Producer Presto and MC Lowd kick it middle school all the way on this one, an ode to the year 1992. Lowd name-drops A Tribe Called Quest, Wu Tang, Beatnuts and damn near every other underground act of the day over backpack-friendly beats from Presto and remixer Beethoven and Bobby Boucher. The end result is less an homage and more the musical equivalent of a throwback jersey: It's supposed to give off an air of "I was there" credibility, but it doesn't ring true. *Ross Hogg*

J-BOOGIE'S DUBTRONIC SCIENCE PURPLE PERPENDICUAL Om/US/12

San Francisco's J-Boogie is a lot of things: club DJ, bandleader, musician, radio host and an uncommonly cool dude who's famous for his fly head-gear. But all that is secondary to the barrage of hip-hop, dubby downtempo and Latin-percussion beats he creates, like this single, where he flashes his club-friendly hip-hop side, with MCs P.E.A.C.E., Rashaan Ahmad, Zion, Deuce Eclipse and Tony Moses offering their takes on the world's pressures. The music is as smooth as J's chapeaux. *Chopper*

ALPHA ZETA EVERYTHING'S DIFFERENT Future Primitive Sound/US/12

The mighty MC Azeem seems to be everywhere at once these days; he's appeared on Bay Area labels Wide Hive, Bomb and others in rapid succession. For Alpha Zeta, he teams with beatmaker DJ Zeph, whose *Sunset Scavenger* (Wide Hive) album is still smoldering. With Azeem's clear, insightful, rapid fire rhyme skills and Zeph's stuttering, uptempo b-boy breaks and hot scratches conjure a

dreamteam of Grandmaster Flash and J5. From start to end, A-Z kill it. *Tomas*

SUPASTITION BOOMBOX Soulspazm/US/12

North Cak's Sup is probably the nicest MC this side of Masta Ace or the GZA. Yeah, he's good enough to be in that company, and on Beat Society's (Illmind, MoO, M-Phrases) Pete Rock-style productions his words seem extra-flexible. Lyrics like "Tuuum-it-up/turn the volume up a notch/in the car, in the crib, in the club, on the block/Just-let it bang till your eardrums pop/Yes-let it bang in your boombox," seem effortless. Do not miss his debut album *The Deadline*. *Derek Grey*

TYPICAL CATS EASY CAUSE IT IS Galapagos 4/US/12

Oakland's Galapagos 4 imprint (put them on your "ones to watch in '05" list) has a new single from Typical Cats' second album release this year. And one listen to "Easy Cause It Is" illustrates how thoroughly this Chitown MC trio (plus DJ Natural) lives hip-hop culture entirely. And if you do too, cop this. Conversely, The Odd Couple's (Louis Logic & Jay Love) "Wreckyalife" on Boston's Brick label is a like a throwback jersey on some cocky new school kids—it rocks a classic Chambers Bro's beat but the MCs brainlessly complain *ad nauseum* about the "slutty bitches" they've known. Dudes, shut up. *Derek Grey*

LEFTFIELD GUEST REVIEWS: INDUCE



Photos: Tony Nelson, Freegums (Induce)

Mentally, Induce lives on the other side of town from those *other* Miami hip-hop cats...you know, Pitbull and Trina? Though he's been perfecting his craft nearly as long, Induce veers toward the experimental and forward-thinking side of the boom-bap. When he's not mobbin' with the Counterflow crew (which he co-founded), he's producing hypnotizing, aquatic beats as one-third of Antennae, whose "Water" 12-inch is out now on Botanica Del Jibaro. Induce is currently hard at work on a solo LP, *Cycle*, for the Wondersound label. We caught him moments before he was swept away by gale-force hurricane winds, and he clued us in on the best music from his Floridian cronies. *Vivian Hoat* www.counterflowrecordings.com

BOOM & BIRDS CAMINO DE MANOS CHUECAS Rice & Beans/US/12

Heading up Boom & Birds, multi-instrumentalist Roberto Lange also puts in time in as one-half of post rock-experimentalists (and Counterflow expatriates) ROM. This Boom & Birds album perfectly and precisely blends audio ambience, Kraut rock excursions, hints of polyrhythmic synthetics and improvised instrumentals. Subdued, yet emotive, this is reminiscent of our imaginations. *Induce*

DOCNUKE.COM PETROLEUM PEEP SHOW Rise & Defeat/US/12

Avid fans of melody, modern song structure and harmony should put this record down and walk...no, fuck that, *run* away. This is not for you. This is modern day revolution music inciting at the very least the feeling of imminent anarchy. Politicians be warned—this is something for you to be quite scared of. *Induce*

CLIMBER DOWNTOWN LOOP Botanica Del Jibaro/US/12

From Miami to Japan, Climber extends a hand to help those minds needing a reminder of the past. Though the norm has become quite different these days, Climber delivers a hip-hop record that isn't sheer nostalgia, but a reflection of how and where we live. Hip-hop is our (lively)hood. *Induce*

EZEKIEL HONIG/GRAPHIC LOVE SESSION Microcosm/US/12

Minimal techno/IDM producer Ezekiel Honig and Graphic share the bill here, remixing tracks by each other. Graphic's watery, crackly drum & bass exploration of Honig's "Love Session" (from *Technology Is Lonely* album) work's surprisingly well alongside the original version, while Honig's choppy remix of Graphic's "1000" is a twisted head-nod, with punctuating fractals amidst shimmering textures. *Tim Pratt*

MIGHTY MATH EXPERIMENTAL CHILD EP Different Drummer/UK/12

Taken from last year's excellent *The Spangled Up Of A Tumbler* album, this EP's highlight is James Taylor of Swayzak's remix as Darkfarmer. The original's shy and retiring organ interludes are brazenly lured into a tight, microhouse mood. Including the glitchy "Neon Heart Cowboy" and the wonderful original cut, the Math adds up evenly here. *Gik*

SEÑOR COCONUT BEAT IT MultiColor/DEN/12

Senor Coconut (Uwe Schmidt), rarely fails to disappoint with his over-the-top Latin covers of pop hits. "Beat It" features two sprightly remixes of Coconut's cover of the Michael Jackson hit. Puerto Rico's Ruben Rodriguez's mix accentuates the tougher, more

electro side of the track with taut beat programming and a bumping bassline, though it really doesn't evolve into a memorable motif. On the flip, DJ Enne's Latino Bass & Breaks Mix filters "Beat It" through a lively, beat-friendly parade with a touch of modern electro-funk. Fun but not essential. *Tim Pratt*

DAMIAK PESERO N5md/US/7

The debut of Mexico City native Damiak on Oakland label n5md's 7Transparen7 series features two twitchy yet oddly emotional tracks: "Iron g" and "Enojon." Both create a playful, uncomplicated vibe amidst a sea of clicks and clacks—echoing early works by Aphex Twin or Autechre—with soothing synthesizer textures and tough ricochet beats sometimes running amok. "Pesero" bodes well for Damiak's full-length debut in 2005. *Tim Pratt*

CITIZENS FEAT. GIRLZKLUB GET THE FUCK OUT REMIXES Lebensfreude/GER/12

Hot punk-dance alert! German duo Citizens craft quite a sassy path on "Get The Fuck Out." Melding a droll, dry vocal delivery that's part rap, part speak-singing, and full of blasé vigor, the pair pump up the playful jam. Five variations on the jaunty track are also included, highlighted by the housey vibe of Laudert's Hot Burrito Mix or Wegner's more down-and-dirty, retro remix. *Tim Pratt*

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FUTURE JAZZ GUEST REVIEWS: CHRIS JOSS

Prepare for the music of Chris Joss thusly. Mix yourself a stiff drink in a highball glass. Put on your smoking jacket. Get the hi-fi swingin'. Then sit back, and be aurally transported 40 years back in time, when skirts were short and silky Rhodes keyboards ruled the airwaves. Influenced by Lalo Schifrin, blaxploitation movie soundtracks and '60s pop, Joss makes retro futurist numbers perfect for lounging poolside or racing around Italy's Amalfi coast in your Fiat. His albums include 1999's *Man With A Suitcase* (Pulp Flavor), 2002's *Dr. Rhythm* (Irma) and *You've Been Spiked*, which dropped in March on Washington D.C.'s home for cocktail jams, Eighteenth Street Lounge. We interrupted Joss' baguette and brie to find out what future jazz and funk sounds he's feeling this month. *Stan McNamara*
www.eslmusic.com

AJA WEST IN PREPARATION Mackrosoft/US/12

Auto detuned vocals from Aja contrast with soulful female background vocals over a minimal beat and a deconstructed bassline. This is immediate underground funk, and it's hard to get out of my head. As on every Mackrosoft release, prestigious guests turn up; the forthcoming *The Olympian* LP will feature Money Mark. *CJ*

SHARON JONES & THE DAP KINGS WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR ME LATELY Daptone/US/12

Probably the first time in music history that a cover of a 20-year-old track sounds like a 40-year-old record, and actually makes the original sound like a cover. Check the website for details on a lawsuit against Miss Janet Jackson. A great hoax, and a funky energetic 45. *CJ*

STRINGTRONICS TROPICOLA Vadim/FRA/12

The Holy Grail of library music is reissued at last—strong emotional content on a track where marimbas, strings, guiro and triangle drift along on a laid-back drums and picked bass. Perfect for when it rains. *CJ*



PAPILLON CHASE YOUR TAIL Far Out/UK/12

Happy 10th anniversary to one of England's most consistent future jazz and Brazilian beats labels, Far Out. They stay as forward as ever with Papillon's (producer Roc Hunter, keyboardist Marcos Valle and vocalist Tina Grace) driving, uplifting slice of electronic soul that takes in broken beats, fusiony synths and the subtle but aggressive feel of early UK garage. Other amazing new singles from Nature's Plan featuring Ed Motta ("Without Worlds") and Azymuth ("Biaozinho Carioca") are also gonna heat up the fall. *Hector Cedillo*

FAT JON THE AMPLE SOUL PHYSICIAN TALK TO ME Exceptional/UK/12

Beatmaker, MC and Five Deez member Fat Jon delivers three new tracks that see his instrumentals further aligning with the like of atmospheric hip-hoppers RJD2 and Blockhead. But Jon's core sound—introspective jazz samples shrouded in subtle keyboard camouflage—have a potent, trad-hip-hop drum-programming foundation. Yam Who's tempo-changing Latin-disco take on Jon's "Torn Again" adds some variety to this EP. *Tomas*

PLATINUM PIED PIPERS STAY WITH ME Ubiquity/US/12

Like fellow Detroiters J-Dilla, Amp Fiddler and Moodymann, PPP update the Motown soul tradition without it sounding like watered down radio R&B. Something about their lazy drum loops, galactic funk samples and vintage Moog/Rhodes swagger only further highlight

Tiobe Lockhart ("Stay With Me") and Georgia's ("Your Day Is Gone") sumptuous vocals. This is honest-to-god real soul music. *Derek Grey*

QUANTIC MISHAPS HAPPENING REMIXES Tru Thoughts/UK/12

The man-of-the-moment Quantic keeps on keeping on with two new remixes off his tight *Mishaps Happening* album. The Bugz's Seiji takes on "Don't Joke With A Hungry Man" and kills it, while Quantic himself bumps up the drums on the title track for the floor. Two new tracks ("Departure" and the moody, sub-bass driven "Quick Sand") round out this nice companion to his latest album. Quantic's moment for now. *Velanche*

MARKUS ENOCHSON YOU'LL SHINE Especial/JPN/12

Swede Markus Enochson's breezy Latin-tinged soul house sounds like a skyscraper designed by Blaze whose frame was arced by the welding iron of broken-jazz specialists Kyoto Jazz Massive, and vocalist Demetreus is testifying lovely! You can't afford not to immediately add each new Especial label triumph to your collection. A good starter is the imprint's recent Euro sampler with Hajime Yoshizawa, Bakura (Domu) and Chris & Nina (Da Lata). *Hector Cedillo*

WEST COAST SCAVENGER EP TSD Studio/US/12

I'm diggin these six weird and wonderful downtempo, experimental beat combinations from the likes of AO Response, Instrumental Ward and Radioinactive. These hazy, jazz-horn-steeped soundtracks' only equivalent might be the first three singles on Mo' Wax circa '94. It's good to see some hip-hop kids more influenced by mushrooms, Burroughs and Dadaism than Courvoisier, Rush Limbaugh and capitalism. *Tomas*

NO COMMENT YOU KNOW (WHAT YOU FIND) Lougin/UK/12

Dave Taylor (a.k.a. Solid Groove) has teamed up with Jesse Rose (Induceve) and house leader Jamie Anderson of NRK, Artform) to found No Comment. "You Know" is a broken-Latin hurricane in the style of percussion master Spiritual South's Green Gold. Let it reign! Taylor is also in the group Switch with Trevor Lovey, whose punchy "Lotta Living" (Freerange) rocks-steady with pulsating bass, wailing sirens and superb clipped beats. *Tomas*

ROBERT JAY ALCOHOL Voxpop/UK/7

The funk vaults are reopened by Manchester imprint and store Vox Pop. Think, funky breaks, think hard-luck crooners, think Northern Soul. Leave it to Detroit native Robert Jay's 1969 single "Alcohol" to make us remember why the music of his era was so special. Pressed on pristine 7" 45 vinyl, Jay's voice sounds like a world-weary Ray Charles, and did I mention he can blow a sax? *Derek Grey*

FILA BRAZILLIA THE GOGGLE BOX EP TwentyThree/UK/7

It's nice to know the Fila Brazillia boys haven't lost their cheeky side. *The Goggle Box EP*, featuring three new tracks on limited edition pink vinyl—from Fila's tenth album (and second of the year) *Dicks*—finds the duo feeling especially perky on the title track, featuring harder-edged breakbeats offset by elegiac synthesizer textures and oddball chirps. Also on 7" vinyl, French producer Hoffmann helps showcase the deeper side of Fila's former home, Pork Recordings, featuring the gorgeous tech house of "Smooth One" and the scruffier title track "Dimlix." *Tim Pratt*

In the early '70s, the world exploded with the release of *Deep Throat I & II*. 32 years later, Light in the Attic takes you back, with a mind-blowing deluxe restoration of both soundtracks!

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**LUCKY 13
BY TOPH ONE**

Now, I hate some preachy motherfuckers as much as you do, so I'll keep this short—I was born into the awful plague that was the Nixon Years, chock full of smog, sprawl and death in Vietnam. My childhood was spent taking backroad drives with my gramps, camping with Pop and playing in the hot sun during Jimmy Carter years. I came of age and consciousness during the Reagan Era—that bastion of unparalleled greed and hate in the '80s. Then Clinton and the '90s—more hot sex and mind-expanding drugs and good times than I can even now fathom. You see the pattern? Now these last four years have by far been the most frightening and numbing I've ever experienced. There is a palpable cloud of doom that has hung over the entire globe since this malicious thief assumed control of the White House in 2000, and *it is time to oust the bastard*. Vote. redwine@xlr8r.com

1) SUNBURN "GOLDEN SINGLES" (Sunburn/US/CD) There was once a beautiful time in San Francisco when we drank champagne and danced barefoot on the beach and kissed strangers and raised our arms to the sun with smiles that stretched into midnight. Was that 10 years ago? No, it was last weekend, jackass.

2) ROMANOWSKI "PARTY IN MY PANTS" (Future Primitive Sound/US/CD) If last summer's "Steady Rocking" was Roman's homage to ska and rock-steady, this latest could be subtitled "Big Beat Bangers from Beyond Belgium." Actually, Roman is from Switzerland, but where's the alliteration there?

3) SHAKEDOWN "LOVE GAME—MOUSSET VS. ERASERHEAD 313 MIX" (Panaorama/FRA/12) Anthemic post-rock made by French disco producers? Why the hell not? Part Gary Numan, part U2, all the way good.

4) V/A "IMPEACH THE PRECEDENT" (Kejmere/US/EP) If this sampler, featuring the body-rocking "New Definition" by This Kid Named Miles & Medusa and a buttery joint from DJ Einstein & Zakir is any idea of the full length LP coming soon, we're all in for a treat. Plus that, all proceeds go to the Rainforest Action Network and other deserving organizations.

5) BEANS "DOWN BY LAW" (Warp/US/12) Two heavyweight contenders from the one called Beans. No joke—this shit's got fangs and a whole lot of bump.

6) DABRYE FEAT. JAY DEE AND PHAT KAT "GAME OVER" (Ghostly International/US/12) Don't even try playing this on anything but a major league soundsystem because your head will explode and your speakers will melt. Intense shit from the Ann Arbor/ Detroit set.

7) HAIKU D'ETAT "COUP DE THEATRE" (Project Blowed-Decon/US/CD) As this gets written, the sun lowers gently into the Pacific, the close of another gorgeous Indian Summer day in Northern Cali—tracks like "Transitions & Eras" and "Dogs" lend themselves perfectly to the twilight, and the coming night and...

8) ALI SHAHEED MUHAMMAD "SHAHEEDULLA & STEREOTYPES" (Penalty/US/CD) The soul and the jazz of the legendary Tribe beatmaker and Lucy Pearl founder shine through into deep NYC midnight. "Lord Can I Have This Mercy" (the first single featuring Chip from the Fu-Schnickens) and the edgy "Banga" are begging for spins.

9) ISLEY BROTHERS "TAKEN TO THE NEXT PHASE" (Epic-Legacy/US/CD) While this reworking of classic, sexy Isley Brothers tunes boasts mixes from ?uest Love, Lenky and Raphael Saadiq, it's the Onda mix of "It's Your Thing" featuring De La Soul that makes this mandatory. Bound to be a rarity and a gold nugget for De La fans.

10) CO-DEEZ "FIRM STANCE" (Upward Sounds-Hella/US/12) Marking the return of his underground SF hip-hop label, TD Camp brings out Co-Deez with what could easily be a Beatnuts banger—"Firm Stance" produced by Otayo Dubb. Hot one, and be on the lookout for "Set the Scene..." featuring Goapele, Heiro, Zion-I, Bored Stiff and San Quinn.

11) FINGATHING "AND THE BIG RED NEBULA BAND" (NinjaTune/CAN/CD) More like a high-speed pterodactyl race to Llaso Apsa with a load full of nitroglycerin than an actual record, there are nonetheless moments of shimmering beauty here. Check "Themes from the Big Red" and "Lady Nebula."

12) ANTENNAE "SILENT" (Botanica del Jibaro/US/12) Miami's Induce and Manuvers lay down a lush, melodic bed for Stres to inhabit with his abstract lyrical twists and turns. "In My Room" and "Light to Light" are things of high mystery and beauty.

LUCKY 13) RAVENSWOOD "2001 RANCHO SALINA" (Ravenswood/US/red wine) You're lucky when you play records that you love for a living, and even luckier when you take a cable car to get to that job, but when you start getting cases of wine to "review" in the mail, you know you've turned pro. I've enjoyed Ravenswood's California Zinfandel and the Australian Shiraz before, and they're yummy, affordable wines. Now I'm entering into the next level with the 2001 Rancho Salina and the 2002 Teldeschi Zinfandel from the fabled Dry Creek Valley. Viva Sonoma!

Below: Haiku D'Etat (Abstract Rude, Mikah 9 and Aceyalone)



**IN MY HUT:
BY VITAMIN
BETTY**



A thatched dwelling in the concrete jungle where electro, grime, synthpunk abide.

Future disco is the new feel good goodie of Indian Summer here in "The Hut." Political activity is brewing in the States and the rest of the unfree world. So to save the night after a hard day's protest, we're gonna get dressed to the nail and drink some cherry wine to these tunes in my hut this month.

James Cotton "Press Your Body" (Spectral) I can't help but jump up and down over the sick production of speedy cowbells, a record breakin' 25-second alarm call sample and brave rhythmic overlays on the B side's funky techno track, "Blue Blood." Pure magic.

Cylob "Spider Report" (Breakin') This producer can do me no wrong. His only release on a non-Rephlex label is an android orchestra of stringent drills, hummingbirds straddling steel stamens and a hint of sharp but sweet melodies. Makes me wanna break some glass in public at night.

Electroputas "Piano Blooms" (The Social Registry) Don't call it a comeback, but psychedelic garage rock is the new techno. We're punk for pogo and coo-coo for Putas. Moody electrostatic guitars, and Can-esque basslines, this band can debauch a CBGB weeknight crowd or fill the sound for a 6,000 foot hangar at Sonar, no probs.

Xavier "XXX" (A Touch of Class) The Big Apple is celebrating its sultry summer nights steppin' out in short shorts, stilettoes and silver make-up to a futuristic disco soundtrack. Xavier's male vocals are as refreshing as a chocolate egg cream on St. Mark's while floating around with a gang of friends. Thanks for bringin' back the finger-snappin', hand-clappin' and beat-boxin'. Everything we love about New York back in the day.

Munk "Mein Schatzi" (Gomma) Zongamin tipped my music scales last year from listening more to bands than techno music. Their funky, jerky drums lend a heavy groove remix to this mutant rap EP with guest vocals by Princess Superstar and bonus edits by Midnight Mike. Slap me, I'm becoming a rocker.

Two Lone Swordsmen "Sex Beat" (Warp) This remix of LA's Gun Club's hit is a grinding, sticky dance floor jam. If you witnessed Suicide's reunion gigs this year, throwing down these broody grooves for the after party would be a lush closer for everyone to make out to.

Slaughter Mob vs. Search & Destroy (Soulja) Tough, tightly-screwed beats, blown-out rubbery basslines and lots of girls yelping—an English bedroom recipe, I reckon.

DJ Nasty "Cherry Popper" (Motor City Electric Company) This percolating booty track is enough to get Sanford and Son up off their asses and shimmying' for at least two and a half minutes. *Hold up, wait-a-minute!*

Drop the Lime (Tigerbeat 6) This guy is the John Lydon Sex Pistol of breakcore. In his tight white jeans, wailing through some Max MSP filter to his violent mocky of mental musicality, he gives laptop performance a good name.



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Sheffield's wonder twins create candy-colored cuteness with a hefty spoonful of evil.

Words: Vivian Host
Images: TADO; at right, an exclusive work for XLR8R



Sharp-toothed monkeys squawk next to winged hearts and a funk-blasting boombox while an evil-looking kid with a baseball bat, riding on the back of a four-eyed My Little Pony, leans in to bash you senseless. You can blink twice, but you're not seeing things. You're immersed in the alternately cute and evil world created by Sheffield, UK, graphic design team TADO.

Insufferably cute themselves (not to mention inseparable), TADO is composed of Mike Doney and Katie Dang. They've recently been making the rounds of nearly every cool art show and project in town, appearing as part of *Giant Robot's* 10th birthday, illustrating for *Pulp*, *Tokion* and *Time Out London*, and launching hot new tees with Kid Robot. But TADO's real to-do is collectible toys—they work extensively with London collectible emporium Playlounge and Toy2R, who are responsible for the obsession-causing bear-shaped keychain toys known as Qees. Right now, they're on the verge of launching The Noggins, a new line of marauding vagrant toys, with the help of Flying Cat.

TADO is at its best when creating candy-colored worlds inspired by videogames and

Saturday morning sugar-cereal-and-cartoon-overload. But their characters always have a dark side, whether opening their mouth to reveal pointy, blood-dripping fangs, chanting "Smell my asshole!" or popping pills, as Bambi does next to a dagger-wielding chicken pirate and a skull graveyard. Recently, in an email festooned with exclamation points and smiley face emoticons, these wild ones let us in on what makes them tick.

www.tado.co.uk

How would you describe what you do?

We tell our relatives we're involved in medical research and that we're currently studying for our PhD in Microbial Adhesion and Virulence.

How did you meet each other?

We met in a pie shop. Katie was after a steak and ale and Mike was queuing for a spicy pastry trays and the rest is history...Actually, that's a lie. We met at uni in 2002 and whiled away the time by eating too many

burgers and cheesy chip butties. **How does your design process work?**

Shouting, bickering, bare fist-fighting and hair pulling. Biting is not allowed, though.

How did you get involved with the folks at Toy2R? Are the limitations different when designing a Qee toy versus something two-dimensional?

We were introduced to Toy2R through our dear friend, Aidan Onn, owner of Playlounge in London, near the end of last summer. We approached Toy2R with a couple of Qee designs, and before we knew it we were in Series Four. In terms of limitations, we didn't think there were many. We think it's quite a natural process for anyone who designs characters, as it enables you to cross easily between 3D and 2D.

How into collectible toys are you two yourselves?

Um...maybe a little bit. Er, well...maybe quite a bit. Actually, we need proper help! Our collection verges on the ridiculous. We





Manuva or a spot of Fugazi, though! It all seems to flow quite naturally after the third coffee of the day...

How does where you live influence your work?

Sheffield probably *does* have a huge subconscious influence on our work. You can't live in a place like this without taking in its...charms! Seriously though, it's a funny one. The place itself is very industrial with a blue-collar background, the nightlife is kak, and there are no nice shops, but in terms of design, there's a whole load of stuff going on. The area around us is all music and fine art studios and design companies. We are literally next door to TDR and DED Associates, and there's a really nice vibe about the whole area. One of the nicest things about Sheffield is that it's practically in the Peak District, so when it all gets a bit much we can escape out there to play with animals and climb up rocks.

What is your favorite color combination ever?

Pink, white or baby blue offset against a nice grey/brown.

Who is a bigger influence: Junko Mizuno, Takashi Murakami or Jigglypuff?

We'd love to have tea with Junko, wrestle with Murakami, and Jigglypuff is our Mr. Miyagi. They're all huge influences to us, but each in their own way.

What was your first design project as TADO?

Our first project was an animation based on a tragic love tale told on china plates. We retold the story using pandas and

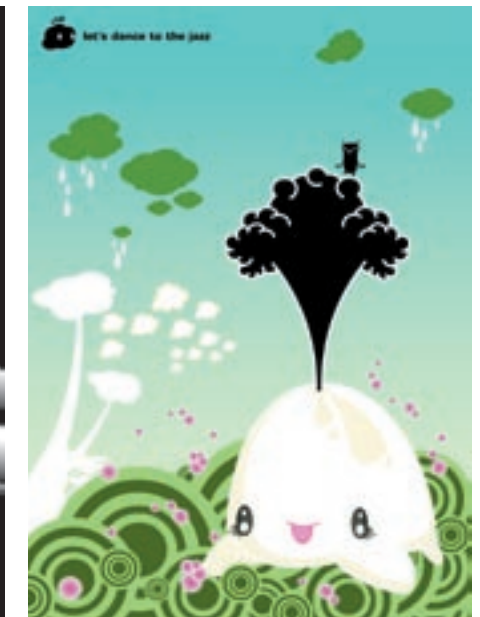
seriously have very little room left in the office and we dread to think how much we've spent! We actually have a company tab at Playlounge!

Is all your stuff done in Illustrator or do you use other media?

Almost all our work is done in Flash, and then exported out to Illustrator or Photoshop. Weird, we know! We use Illustrator from time to time, especially for print work, but we find the drawing tools in Flash a more natural way of working. Although 98% of our work is computer-based, we still enjoy getting the crayons out once in a while!

Your work puts me in the mood to eat a lot of candy, listen to manic rave tunes and then go beat someone up. Do you need to get in a certain mood to do work...or does it flow naturally?

Follow the above instructions and you're just about there! Swap the rave music for a bit of Roots



gorillas—all very strange. Our first commercial project was for a Christian company called Latin Link. They asked us to design a flyer for their summer festival back in 2002. We're not sure if they've seen our more recent work. If so, they might not ask us back again!

What are your favorite CDs in the office right now?

2many DJs: *Pt. 9* (Phantom); Squarepusher: *Big Loada* EP (Warp/Nothing); Skinnyman: *Council Estate Of Mind* (Lowlife); The Misfits: *Static Age* (Caroline); Missy Elliott: the whole discography!

Who is your favorite British "personality"?

Michelle McManus, the winner of the British *Pop Idol* 2004. She is awesome in every sense of the word!

What is your favorite cartoon character?

Mike: To-Fu Oyako by Devil Robots.
Katie: Grammi Gummi bear because she rocks!

What advice would you give to young graphic designers?

Stay up too late, watch everything by Studio Ghibili and be friendly!

Teach us some Sheffield slang so we can rule.

Thou dun't need owt for a reet good time in Sheff. It dun't cost nuthin' to get propa lairy and Rotherham burds are well up for mischief, innit?



TBC: LALO ALCARAZ

LOS ANGELES CARTOONIST LALO ALCARAZ'S NEW ANTHOLOGY REVEALS THE INVISIBLE MEXICAN IN AMERICA.

WORDS: DEREK BERES IMAGES: LALO ALCARAZ

The devilishly innocent way Calvin tugs at Susie's ponytail. The heroic manner Snoopy navigates WW II-imagined skies. The easy laziness of Garfield tricking Otto into dumbfounded misery. Comic strips are as old and dear to American media as political commentary and, in many ways, ring a louder truth. The combination of smacking our funny bone while twisting light bulbs in the mind is the trademark of true ink slingers. Just don't call it easy.

Condensing social theories, critical observations and entire histories into one to three panels of roughly sketched bendable figures is a tall order. Factor in racially-heated undertones—as in Lalo Alcaraz's Latino-themed strip "La Cucaracha"—and the cartoonista has to be loco just to consider undertaking such a career. But when Alcaraz, a San Diego native of Mexican descent, was at SD State University during the Reagan era, he landed a gig as editorial cartoonist for the school newspaper, *The Daily Aztec*. The rest has been historical.

Residing in a country with a Latin-dominated minority (some 38 million residents), little media expression has been offered to this disenfranchised segment. Taking up issues such as immigration and border patrol, gang violence and "English language only" political platforms, Alcaraz introduced "La Cucaracha" into the American psyche via the free newspaper *LA Weekly* two months after 1992's Los Angeles riots. The strip has become so successful that over 65 national newspapers have picked it up, syndicating installments of his daily and weekly strips from sea to shining sea.

Collecting a broad expanse of political-focused 'toons into one volume, *Migra Mouse: Political Cartoons on Immigration* (RDV/Akashic; softcover, \$12.95) is so funny it will make you scream obnoxiously, and so incredibly eye-opening it reveals the nonchalant stereotyping our southern neighbors experience daily.

A charged topic of local and national politics, the Mexican border has become a physical and psychical scapegoat since the "War on Terror" commenced three years ago. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been pumped into technologies to stop illegal immigration, including the recent testing of the Pulsed Fast Neutron Analysis System (PDF), a nuclear device that can determine the contents of a truck without opening doors. These are the stories Alcaraz translates in cartoon speak, offering an absent voice in a media dominated by tales of dirty immigrants ruining society by raising social program costs and taking low-paid jobs.

What those arguments don't consider—and Alcaraz does—is the contribution immigrants have made to American culture. "The US was founded on immigration," he writes, pointing out that the development of the entire nation owes credit to those from elsewhere. Strips like "Smallpox Infested Blankets?," featuring a Disney-rendered Pocahontas, get to the meat of this topic. Taking on labor, both legal and off the books, Alcaraz is not shy in drawing the ways which the upper class benefits from Mexican toil while claiming borders need be closed. This is highlighted brilliantly in a 1995 cartoon entitled "San Diego Republican Convention," where a senator and wife are discussing anti-immigration meetings poolside while being served by a Mexican waiter, a Mexican maid and landscaper in the back.

Since *Migra Mouse* is a politically oriented book, we won't even address the growing artistic contributions being made by Mexicans in the United States. Yet arts do play into Alcaraz's genius. The name of his strip is pulled from the traditional Mexican folk song and "the cockroach" has become synonymous with a weird combination of civic pride and stereotypical amusement. Alcaraz plays both angles when laying into Proposition 187 (a California initiative banning undocumented immigrants from any public services) and the bill's major proponent, Governor Pete Wilson. The bill, after initially passing, was overturned, in the process exposing Wilson for the chump he was. On the frontlines, Alcaraz was tracing the controversy with black pen on white space, doing his part to raise these and other issues Mexicans are forced to deal with...as funny as that may seem, or not.

Migra Mouse is available now on RDV/Akashic. www.akashicbooks.com, www.cartoonista.com.



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Illustration: Aaron Terry (See more on page 128.)

MUSIC TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL ED'S RANT

I can accept the fact that, despite 70-degree temperatures in San Francisco, it's fall, and also that, train as I do, I'll probably never run a 5K in less than 18 minutes, but *bloody hell*, is it really *XLR8R*'s third annual Music Technology issue already? Sure is, and we're ready to plug shit in and get down with profiles on the latest music hardware, sexy software, DJ equipment and even some stuff that hasn't been made yet. Previous years' Music Technology issues have seen *XLR8R* talk to minimal producer Mileece and circuit bender Chachi Jones (who contributes an awesome neKo 74 review to this issue), as well as cover turntable design and the development of companies like Reason and Cycling 74.

So much changes every year in the high-tech world that each Music Technology issue we do poses its share of challenges. Some considerations this year included which of the burgeoning crop of killer CD turntables to review, especially when so many of the review models weren't available to test out in person. We also had the (some would say) enviable task of getting our heads around two major software applications, Ableton Live 4.0 and Emagic Logic Pro 6. These programs take hours just to master the basics—at least, for us dumb DJ/editors.

But this year's Music Technology issue is something we've looked forward to all year—literally! We started our research in January at the NAMM convention in Anaheim, where the latest boatload of music-making stuff is unveiled to the masses. From there, we snooped around our friends' studios, pestered the dudes down at ye olde Robot Speak digital music equipment shoppe, and chatted up our electronic producer forces far and wide to determine what music gear people use, what they'd like to use and what drugs we should use *less*, in order to figure it all out.

With that spirit in mind, travel on with us in these pages to Music Technology land, a wire-strewn, brushed metallic world where circuit boards and computers will aid your every creative whim. And before you're even finished, it'll be time for *XLR8R* to start next year's search for the newest, coolest machines and apps. Technology might move fast, but *XLR8R* will always stay right there with it.

-Tomas Palermo

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Cover Illustration: Saiman Chow

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MINIMAL TECHNO PRODUCER TWERK USES EMAGIC LOGIC TO RUN HIS MASTERING BUSINESS AND TO MAKE MUSIC. BUT IS LOGIC THE BEST SOFTWARE SEQUENCER FOR EVERYONE ELSE?

Words: Tomas Palermo
Photos: Jen Siska



"I THINK WITHIN A DAY ALL MY GEAR BECAME OBSOLETE. IT WAS LIKE, 'OH MY GOD, I DON'T NEED ALL THIS HARDWARE CRAP, MY WHOLE STUDIO'S IN THIS COMPUTER.'"

Whether he's out on a 100-mile ride in the blazing Sonoma heat or mastering the latest album for Florida IDM label Merck in his Audibleoddisities studio, Shawn Hatfield likes to deal with technical precision. From the Italian parts on his Giant TCR all-carbon fiber climbing bike to the minutiae Hatfield puts in his intricate music productions as Twerk, the small details matter to this exceptionally driven native Californian.

But don't be mistaken, Hatfield's no genius jock who grinds gears up steep hills by day and dallies about on the computer by night; instead he's just a crystal-eyed guy from rural Santa Cruz who grew up alongside farm worker kids and shredding concrete bowls on his skateboard. Hatfield never expected to be a notable international techno producer, the owner of a mastering business or, for that matter, a competitive bike racer—it just happened.

Analog Years

Hatfield spent his formative years skateboarding at Derby Park, a concrete skate bowl in Santa Cruz, and becoming absorbed with hip-hop and b-boy culture. In 1992, he relocated to San Francisco. Upon arriving in the city, an old friend from Santa Cruz introduced Hatfield to Cesar (DJ Cesar) Alcantar. Alcantar was DJing in SF clubs and collecting early Chicago, Detroit and New York techno—he introduced Hatfield to the broad palette of early '90s electronic music. Hatfield ended up gravitating towards Swedish techno artists Cari Lekebusch, Adam Beyer and the offbeat sound of Christain Vogel and Dave Tarrida's on Sativa. "I liked the hard well-produced stuff or the experimental wacked-out stuff, [that's] what got me interested in [techno music]," he explains.

Alcantar had also built a sizable analog hardware studio in his flat, and Hatfield learning as much about the gear as he could. He had a knack for figuring out how to use new drum machines and synthesizers rapidly. "I would always surprise myself with how quick I got in and started manipulating a piece of gear," Hatfield recalls. "And I spent a lot of time navigating through really small LCD menus!"

While other producers would collect gear without bothering to learn it, Hatfield's methodical personality was his guide. "I would go in there and focus on a particular [machine]," he says. "I remember thinking, 'What is a Roland 909? How does it work?'" Before long, Hatfield began building his own home studio, starting with an Emu ESI-32 sampler. At the same time he was also DJing and hanging at clubs like Mad and Static, whose guest lists were a virtual who's who of the mid-'90s SF techno scene. DJ Alex, Sutekh, Monty Luke, Jonah Sharp, Jon Williams, Sho, Joe Rice, Jon Santos, Kit Clayton, OST and Safety Scissors were just some of the names who

regularly showed up.

"I saw Neil Landstrumm and Tobias Schmidt play at a Mad party," Hatfield remembers. "That was the first time I saw that techno could be performed live. They used an Ensoniq ASR-X, a Sequential Pro-1 and a Roland 909, and with those three units they were able to put together a very cohesive, interesting and fun live set."

But Hatfield found himself more interested with recording than DJing. Having produced his own tracks for a scant three months, his first single as Twerk ("Los Colores," co-produced with Alcantar) finally saw the light of day in 1998 on Jon Williams' Organized Noise label. Twerk quickly released singles on British labels Planet Rhythm and Template and local imprints Cytrax and Delay, and collaborated with Sutekh and Safety Scissors on the *Deadpan Escapement* LP for Belief Systems.

SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

By the late '90s, computer prices dropped significantly and music software for home studios began to proliferate. San Francisco was a hotbed of both software development and techno, and Hatfield was in the middle of it all.

"I had a nice analog studio," Hatfield enthuses, "a lot of keyboards and drum machines running off a Yamaha QY-700 sequencer, a DBX compressor and TC Electronic Fireworks, which, at the time, was one of the most robust effects processors you could buy." But everything changed for Hatfield when a girlfriend brought home a new Sony Vaio desktop computer. Hatfield was intrigued by what the machine could do for his music.

While buying cables for his studio one day, Hatfield's eyes turned to a vast wall of new music software applications. Overwhelmed, he explained his recording needs to a clerk who recommended he buy a sound editor; Hatfield wound up with Adobe Cool Edit Pro. After installing the program, he realized he didn't know anything about configuring sound cards, but he dove in regardless. "I think within a day all my gear became obsolete," he remembers. "It was instantaneous. It was like, 'Oh my god, I don't need all this hardware crap. My whole studio's in this computer.'"

Hatfield learned basic sound treatments in Cool Edit Pro, but still had to dump everything from the computer back into the hardware sampler using SCSI cables. His frustration with that time-intensive process and increasing love of the computer setting inspired his second audio software purchase—Emagic Logic.

MAINTAIN CONTROL

Hatfield remembers his transition from the world of Cool Edit Pro to Logic: "I bought Logic 3.0—that was insane. I set it up [on the Sony Vaio] and [realized I] had to get a MIDI interface to use it properly. I bought an Emagic Unitor 8 because I

figured, 'If I have their sequencer, I might as well use their interface.'"

Hatfield's first goal was to try and get Logic to control his hardware equipment. "I found it pretty exciting just to see if I could use my old [hardware]," he says. "Logic was a pretty complicated program to wrap my head around. Although I had an innate ability to learn computers and software, I would just sit there and spend 12 or 14 hour periods trying to figure out everything Logic could do." Hatfield quickly moved on from merely controlling his studio using Logic to doing audio tracks in the program, but was stifled by his computer's hard drive limitations and slow speed.

"I was trying to internalize my whole studio process into my computer and get away from the gear," he explains. "I wanted to do all my sound processing within one window of a computer."

Hatfield eventually bought faster computers that performed how he wanted them to without "choking up," and by 2000 he was producing all his music using Logic. Following 1999 releases on Sutekh's Context, Kit Clayton's Delay and Markus Miller and Jasper's Cytrax, German techno powerhouse Force Inc. took note, and later released three Twerk full-lengths: *Humantics* (2000), *Now I'm Rendered Useless* (2001) and *Living Vicariously Through Burnt Bread* (2003).

LIVE TRANSMISSION

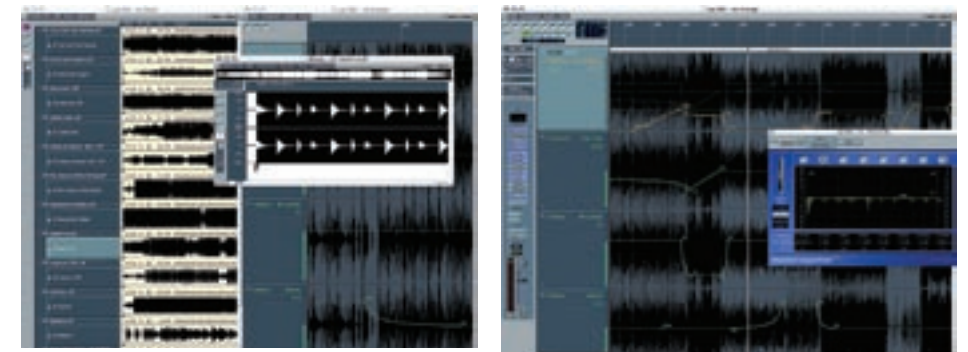
Hatfield was now immersed in Logic and other music software, but the increasing demand for him to do live performances led him toward even newer applications. Although he'd seen people playing live with Logic, Hatfield personally didn't feel comfortable using it, nor did he know about Logic's Touch Tracks objects (a triggering device

that allow you to use MIDI note events to initiate playback of individual sequences or folders). About the same time, Joshua "Kit" Clayton began to work with Cycling 74's Max MSP. While visiting Clayton to pick up some records, Hatfield popped down down to Clayton's basement studio where his laptop was running the program. Clayton tried to explain how it worked, but Hatfield didn't really understand the verbals. Still, he could see what was happening on screen, and knew it was incredible.

Clayton challenged Hatfield to start using Max MSP: "So a week later I went and got a PowerBook and purchased a copy," Hatfield describes. "I took it home, fired it up, and said, 'Oh, wait, this is really hard!' So Hatfield called Clayton and asked him to send some of the loop-engine programs he created, which helped Hatfield understand Max's mutable possibilities.

Hatfield eventually developed a loop engine that Clayton created into his own tool for live performances, and made his club debut in spring 2001 at the weekly Static party at the 300 Ritch Street club in San Francisco. It went over like gangbusters. A bemused Hatfield recalls, "All of sudden people were like, 'Why don't you play live over at this party?' and I'm like, 'Uh, okay.' Every time I'd do a live show, I'd make a new set of audio files to work with. I would design every live set for that party. You wouldn't have ever heard [any of the music before], and you wouldn't hear it again after." Soon after, he was invited to play Spain's Sonar festival and toured throughout Germany. But as quickly as he explored the live touring thing, he got sick of it.

Hatfield returned to producing and started exploring Logic's capabilities. "With synthesis," Hatfield explains, "although I could get some



Logic screenshots from Twerk's desktop: "[The top image] illustrates logic's intuitive ability to automate plug-in parameters. Here you can see I am controlling things like multi-band compression, but only in the areas where I need it. EQs can be automated to cut specific frequencies in problem areas without affecting the track as a whole. In the [the bottom image] I'm setting start and stop points for this specific audio region. You can also see a list of audio files which have been loaded for this particular project. Next to it is the Arrange window for easy drag and drop from the audio list."



pretty cool sounds out of the keyboards, most of the time I was either making pads or spaceship sounds. With the computer I could layer textures together. With Logic I was able to get really processed, mangled stuff." But mangled techno doesn't pay the bills.

MASTER CLASS

"Mastering was something I had always been doing since I started making music," Hatfield states. His electronic producer friends were always impressed by how loud and how good Hatfield's early techno tracks sounded and they began looking to Hatfield to help finalize their works. Hatfield would take their DATs, run the tracks through his EQ units, DBX compressor and TC Fireworks effect processors and hand them back, for free, on a friend-to-friend basis. "I didn't know what I was doing was called mastering," he explains. "I was just trying to make their music sound as good as it could."

As time passed, some producers began relying on Hatfield to finalize all of their recorded works. He began to charge for his services and, to his surprise, no one balked. "It was a difficult thing for me to ask for money," Hatfield explains, "especially after having come from doing it for free. But once I got over that step, it was easier for me to do the work, spend more time on it and not feel like I was being taken advantage of."

By the end of 2003 his interest in creating hard music waned, and he quickly found himself with more free time. "It wasn't long before I found myself pretty busy doing mastering for people while still working on my last album (*Living Vicariously Through Burnt Bread* for Force Inc.)." Hatfield recalls. "After I finished my album, I found myself pretty much working a 9-to-5 doing mastering. I just found myself in a business that I didn't know I had started." Audibleoddities Studio officially opened in March 2004, and Hatfield now masters albums for Florida electronic label Merck, Seattle's Orac, and Mathew "Safety Scissors" Curry's Proptronics, among others.

THE LOGIC OF IT ALL

At first, Hatfield considered switching to the music industry's standard digital recoding application, ProTools, but the system's hardware costs were prohibitive. Because Hatfield already owned and used Logic, he was able to customize it like a ProTools system. Hatfield created his own "default" song

loaded with 32 audio channels and 12 mastering plug-ins per channel. Using it as a blank slate, he's able to import a project, drop each track into its own audio channel and work on everything individually. "Logic tackled all of my issues for how I wanted to set up my ideal mastering system," he says.

Hatfield's customization of Logic is ongoing. When he first started using it for mastering six months ago, he wasn't as dialed in with the details as he is now. "I've been trying to find the quickest ways to get things done, so I've been using a lot of the Logic key commands, and external controllers to control the internal plug-ins."

Logic Pro 7 is now smart enough that as soon as you select something, it automatically maps to the controller. "It's just a matter of selecting the automation track and then moving the fader [on the controller] and it's happening already as you use it!" says Hatfield.

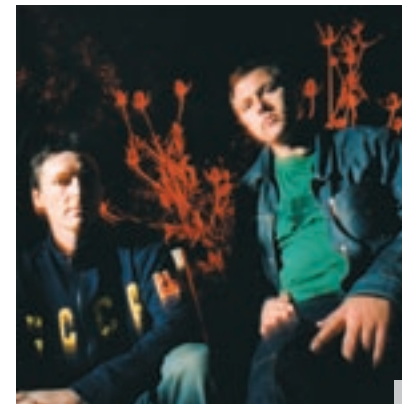
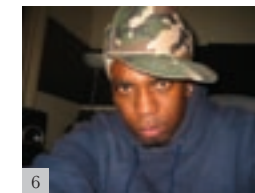
MAPPING THE FUTURE

Currently, Hatfield uses self-written Max-MSP choruses, filtering units and sound processors within Logic, including an FFT (Fast Fourier Transform) filter with a 512-band (!) EQ. "It enables me to cut out some very specific little things," he says devilishly. His studio has also come full circle; Hatfield has recently added a number of analog compressors to warm up electronic tracks the old-fashioned way.

"I'm finding there's no replacement for a good old-fashioned analog tube unit," he shares. "I've got an Avalon 747-SP [compressor], and I'm getting some Manley [EQ] units soon—some really high-end mastering tools." But Logic is still a prime enabler for Hatfield's business. "[Logic] brings all the various aspects of composition and engineering into one tight little package," he explains. "It sets up virtual audio tracks like a real hardware mixing desk."

He also likes Logic's ability to drop effects and plug-ins directly into a given channel, and its high-speed processing. "[Logic's] automation system is probably the single most important thing for my work now," Hatfield says, "and also the fact that everything is so immediate. I'm just one click away from setting something up how I need it to be."

Logic Pro 7 MSRP: \$999; Logic Express 7 MSRP: \$299; www.apple.com/logic
For more on Twerk, visit www.audibleoddities.com



IT'S ONLY LOGICAL ARTISTS TELL US WHAT THEY LIKE (AND DON'T LIKE) ABOUT EMAGIC LOGIC

1. King Britt, FiveSix Media, Philadelphia

"I could not do music without it. I'm still in [Mac platform] OS9 due to my many plug-ins but [Logic] gives me the freedom to really spread my ideas and make things happen quickly and efficiently. It's the brain of my whole set-up."

www.kingbritt.net

2. Joshua Eustis, Telefon Tel Aviv, Chicago

"[Telefon Tel Aviv] has been running [Logic] since 1999, we're still using version 4.7.3! We use it for all our sequencing and arranging with MIDI, string parts, etc. We also use it for some audio processing. Logic is a breeze to learn, but for devolved simpletons like us, it was tricky to learn!"

www.telefontelaviv.com

3. Jonah Sharp, Reflective Records, San Francisco

"I've been using Logic 4.8.1 for about four years. The audio section is pretty much rock solid and the program can be easily personalized to the user's particular setup. As for improvements, I'd like to see some of the "elastic audio" features of Ableton Live in Logic."

www.reflectiverecords.com

4. Steve Cobby, Fila Brazillia, Hull, UK

"[Fila] have been Emagic from day one. As soon as [Dr. Gerhard] Lengeling and his boys set up Emagic/Logic we had to start learning it from scratch—it was a steep learning curve, I can't lie. A college that tutors a basic course in Platinum Audio 6 suggests a minimum of 80 hours on it before you start work in earnest. Considering an aircraft pilot only has to do 40 hours to get his license it's indicative of its complexity. One improvement we'd like to see is for the Mixer page to be as scaleable as the Arrange page. So you could see 60-odd meters at once if you wanted to, but all really small."

www.23online.co.uk

5. AGF, Berlin

"I started with a crack of Logic 4.8 when I bought first Apple PowerBook Pismo in 2000. Later, I got Logic 6 for my birthday from my boyfriend. I mainly use [Logic] for composing, the sequencer is not too important to me—I use it like a tape machine converting and editing lots of tracks. I recorded all of [my most recent album] *Westernization Completed* (Orthlorng Musork) with [Logic]. The price could be less so more people would be able to afford it."

www.poemproducer.com

6. Subcode, Los Angeles

"I've been using Logic 6 for 17 months; I started on 4.7 in May 2001. It took about a year to master this program, but I had help from friends like drum & bass producer Esassin. I use [Logic] to import audio files and add plug-ins and automation to finalize the mix—it's a finishing tool. Logic's sonic resolution is so high that beats sound too mechanical to me, compared to Reason, which sounds more like an MPC or drum machine. I like sequencing in a courser resolution. Also, if Logic could integrate a [simple] Reason-like environment that would make me wanna stay completely in Logic from start to finish."

www.nohomojo.com

FOUR CONSUMMATE HIP-HOP ARTISTS ROCK THREE NEW MICS TO DETERMINE THE BEST OF THE BATCH.

Words: Tomas Palermo Photos: Paul O'Valle
Technical Support: Jesse Terry



The mic challengers (clockwise from left): Rashaan Ahmad, Motion Man, Joyo Velarde, Zion and Lyrics Born

A painter needs his brushes, an architect, a good ruler and a proctologist, those sterile latex mittens. So it stands to reason that the most important tool for an MC or vocalist is the right microphone. Mics are not created equal; tone, volume output and feedback tendencies vary widely between models and brands, and often a high price doesn't mean a better unit.

So who rules in the kingdom of voice amplification? We picked three professional stage mics and asked four esteemed hip-hop vocalists to test these devices' merits. The results surprised our guests—mic companies' names and reputations went out the door as our talented MCs took each one to the limit. So who came out on top? First meet the voices that made our mics bleed.

THE EXPERTS

Joyo Velarde: Quannum Projects' queen and an Italian opera-trained vocalist, Ms. Velarde can be seen on all the Quannum tours and heard singing hooks on her soulmate Lyrics Born's *Later That Day*. Her own solo full-length drops in '05.

Motion Man: As abstract and original as a Dali painting, Motion Man is known for non-stop rhymes and collabs with Kool Keith, Kut Masta Kurt and London's DJ Vadim. Rap's first action figure-inspired MC, his album

Clearing The Field (Threshold) showcased his far-flung and fantastic lyric artistry. He promises us a new album, tentatively called *Save Your Lunch Money*, in '05.

Rashaan Ahmad (Crown City Rockers): An MC's MC, Ahmad can freestyle for hours on end. His talents are on full display on Crown City's new full-length, *Earthtones* (Basement), which is sure to be considered a modern hip-hop classic.

Zion (Zion-I): Zion is both a dynamic stage performer and super-gifted studio lyricist. Albums like *Mind Over Matter* and *Deep Water Slang* have deservedly earned Zion-I a worldwide following, with tour stints stretching from Europe to the Philippines and Brazil. Zion-I's new mixtape, *Family Business*, is out now on their Live Up label, and the new album *True & Livin* will be released March 2005.

DJ Enki: Future Primitive Sound resident and *XLR8R* hip-hop scribe, Enki wowed us all by chopping up everything from "Impeach The President" to G-Unit beats. His Cool Hand Luke-type mixology provided the sonic anvil on which our wordsmiths hammered the mics.

Guest host and hype man: Lyrics Born!



Note: we invited industry standard Shure, whose ULXS24 Wireless mic won our previous challenge, to take part, but they declined. Guest host Lyrics Born used a Sennheiser Evolution to host the proceedings.

Rating scale: 5=best, 1=worst

THE MICS

Samson Q7 Solidly constructed with a sturdy, round windscreen and high output Neodymium mic element. Comes housed in a foam-lined plastic case with mic clip included.

MSRP: \$199.99; www.samsontech.com

AKG D-3800 Medium-heavy construction feels just right in your palm; gold plated XLR for use with a standard microphone cable or employ the TM 40 transmitter module for use with AKG wireless systems WMS 4000 and WMS 80. Hard shell road case with swivel handle doubles as a Goth purse.

MSRP: \$252; www.akg.com

Nady SPC-20 A lightweight handheld mic with heavyweight sound performance, gold-plated XLR connector and pop-filter. Comes with a plastic case and its shape is not unlike a sno-cone.

MSRP: \$69.95; www.nady.com

THE RESULTS

Rashaan Ahmad Ratings

Rashaan gave a little mic check, got adjusted to the stage monitors then went for his, freestyling and doing his track "B-boy." His chest swelled with a deep breath, slaughtering each of the three mics with hype vocab. Fools in the audience were dancing!

Samson Q7: Rating: 2 "I don't really like this microphone right here. Thumbs down."

AKG D-3800: Rating: 4 "I like the way this mic feels even more than the way it sounds. I give this a *quat-trol!*"

Nady SPC20: Rating: 5 "I don't even want to stop on this one, I like this a lot. I give this one a nickel—a nickel for the Nady. I know you're not supposed to cup the mic, but this one feels like you could do it and it would still be clear."

Motion Man Ratings

Motion took his time, stalking each mic, testing them with vocal sound effects before launching into off-the-wall, jaw-dropping lyrics—a barrage of quips about his bald head, the mics, beer and aliens.

Samson Q7: Rating: 3 "Yeah this mic is cool, but it's got kind of limited range. It's just a *regular* show mic, like [he deadpans] 'Okay, I just did a show...'"

AKG D-3800: Rating: 4.81 "I like this one. It's loud-ish. I give it a 4.81, 'cause I make my own [volume] adjustments, though. I just came up here to rate mics, not unleash the new formula, as a lyrical man."

Nady SPC-20: Rating: 4.9237 "I think I like the feel of this one. [It would] be the best on stage. I gotta go home now—I've got kids and babies!"



Joyo Velarde Ratings

Joyo was the flyest dressed individual in the building with her feathered fedora cocked in a b-girl stance. She sang clearly into each vessel with her robust, confident vocal acrobatics. Velarde mesmerized the room with each of her three tests.

Samson Q7: Rating: 4 "This one is nice and bright. It's got a nice warm body."

AKG D-3800: Rating: 3 "This one is a little bit more mid-rangey. All the guys sounded dope on this one, but I liked the Samson better."

Nady SPC20: Rating: 5 "I like the way this one sounds the best, it's very clear. It accommodated a lot of different ranges, high to low."

Lyric Born's Pick: "I like the Samson. I give this one a 3.9."

Zion Ratings

Zion stepped up to the stage and hit one original track ("Critical") and two hot freestyles. When he tours he prefers the Shure SM-58 but here's how he rated the others.

Samson Q7 Rating: 3.5 "It's weighted nice, like a nice weapon, but I don't get the full projection that I like."

AKG D-3800: Rating: 5 "I like this mic! I was gonna give it a 4.5, but fuck it, give it a 5."

Nady SPC20: Rating: 4 "Sounds like money. This one's cool too."

**XLR8R MIC CHALLENGE 2004
WINNER: NADY SPC20**

LYRICS BORN: "THE LADY LIKES THE NADY, AND ITS ALL GRAVY!"

Joyo and Lyrics Born: www.quannum.com
 Motion Man: www.motionman.com
 Rashaan Ahmad: www.crowncityrockers.com
 Zion: www.zioncrew.com
 DJ Enki: www.futureprimitivesound.com

Numark
empowerment by design



believe

we had this dream - the dream of harnessing digital sound with the irreplaceable feel of working with vinyl. we designed CDX to fulfill that dream. do anything with CDs that you can do with records, all while feeling genuine turntable. it's fine to question your eyes. just believe your hands, and believe your ears. touch vinyl, play digital, believe CDX.

THE FOURCE IS WITH YOU

COLDCUT, MÚM, FUNKSTÖRUNG, GEOFF WHITE AND SCANNER SOUND OFF ON ABLETON LIVE 4.0

Words: Jesse Terry



Ableton Live is *the* audio software for beat-heads wanting to evolve beyond DJing and fuse it with music making," states Ninja Tune's head man Matt Black of Coldcut. "It's all too rare to find a software that anticipates the users' needs so intelligently."

While Black's gushing praise is backed up by his 20 years of experience with Solid Steel radio and club DJ sets, he nails a key aspect of Ableton's success: anticipation is the company's specialty. By bringing MIDI sequencing and instrumentation into Live 4.0, Ableton has not only given users a complete stage/studio answer, they've done it fluently and without any hitches.

Since Live was released in 2001, it's built a reputation with on-the-fly looping, time-warp possibilities and live performance stability. DJs and musicians alike are becoming Live converts faster than Ableton's competitors can catch up.

Gunnar Tynes of Iceland's Múm is a fan. "The thing that I like best with Live is how fun it is to play around with, and it's easy to drastically change songs/sounds in every direction, especially with a big collection of VST plug-ins." As Tynes' comments illustrate, with Ableton Live, the emphasis is on immediate results, ease of use and stability. "It's an absolutely revolutionary application that allows you to be totally intuitive," says Michael Fakesch of Funkstörung. "While other sequencers make you pull down menus and check off options and preferences, Live is extremely simple. Drag your sample onto an audio track or your VST instrument onto a MIDI track and you're off." Live 4.0 includes new drum, sampling and synthesis instruments, making it easier to forget other programs exist. While Ableton Live is coming to its own as an all-in-one package, the results from combin-

ing it with other programs can be equally exciting.

There is no single method for using Live in a performance setting; many artists are developing their own techniques and combining Live with other applications. "I started out by using a MIDI controller that I had mapped out creatively to trigger various features in the program. These days, I use a program called M from Cycling 74 to do the triggering. I don't think I should go too far into the origins of my secret methods," Tynes says coyly.

Other producers are turning to Five12's software program, Numerology, to manipulate MIDI features in Live. Matt Black and his partner Jonathan More of Coldcut have developed Coldcutter, a VST plug-in for use in Live, which chops up beats and randomly rearranges them. "We can also use Live as a sequencer for Vjamm [video jockey software], for performance and composition." The same goes for VJ programs made by Arkaos and Cycling 74's Jitter, or virtual instruments and sequencers like Propellerheads Reason.

Either on its own or in conjunction with other programs, Ableton Live 4.0 is unmatched as a stage instrument. But Live is an increasingly important tool in the studio. "I've found that Live is equally capable as a multi-track recorder for song construction, a work-space for global arrangement of complete albums and a scratchpad for developing ideas. Every time Ableton releases a new version of the software, I find that more tasks are being completed in Ableton Live," says techno producer Geoff White. "Live 4.0 is the heart of our live sets, but it's also an important tool to manipulate sounds in our studio setup," concurs Fakesch.

While other programs encourage a solitary, loner-in-the-studio vibe, Live inherently develops a sense of community with other musicians. You can actually jam and collaborate on the spot in real time. As sound sculptor Robin Rimbaud, a.k.a. Scanner, puts it, "It's offered me the chance to sit in the jungles of Vietnam with local artists and create music live with a microphone attached to the laptop. It's been the savior in downtime in a shady hotel when a deadline is approaching for work. I'm amazed that even in remote locations like Vietnam local artists were reasonably familiar with Live. The speed with which it's altered the pattern of musical composition in the last three years or so is quite unbelievable." As more musicians catch on to Live, the results will only become more unbelievable.

Coldcut: www.ninjatune.net/coldcut, Scanner: www.scannerdot.com, Múm: www.randomsummer.com/book, Geoff White: www.edit-audio.com, Funkstörung: www.funkstorung.com
Ableton Live 4.0 MSRP: \$499; www.ableton.com

"IT'S OFFERED ME THE CHANCE TO SIT IN THE JUNGLES OF VIETNAM WITH LOCAL ARTISTS AND CREATE MUSIC LIVE WITH A MICROPHONE ATTACHED TO THE LAPTOP."

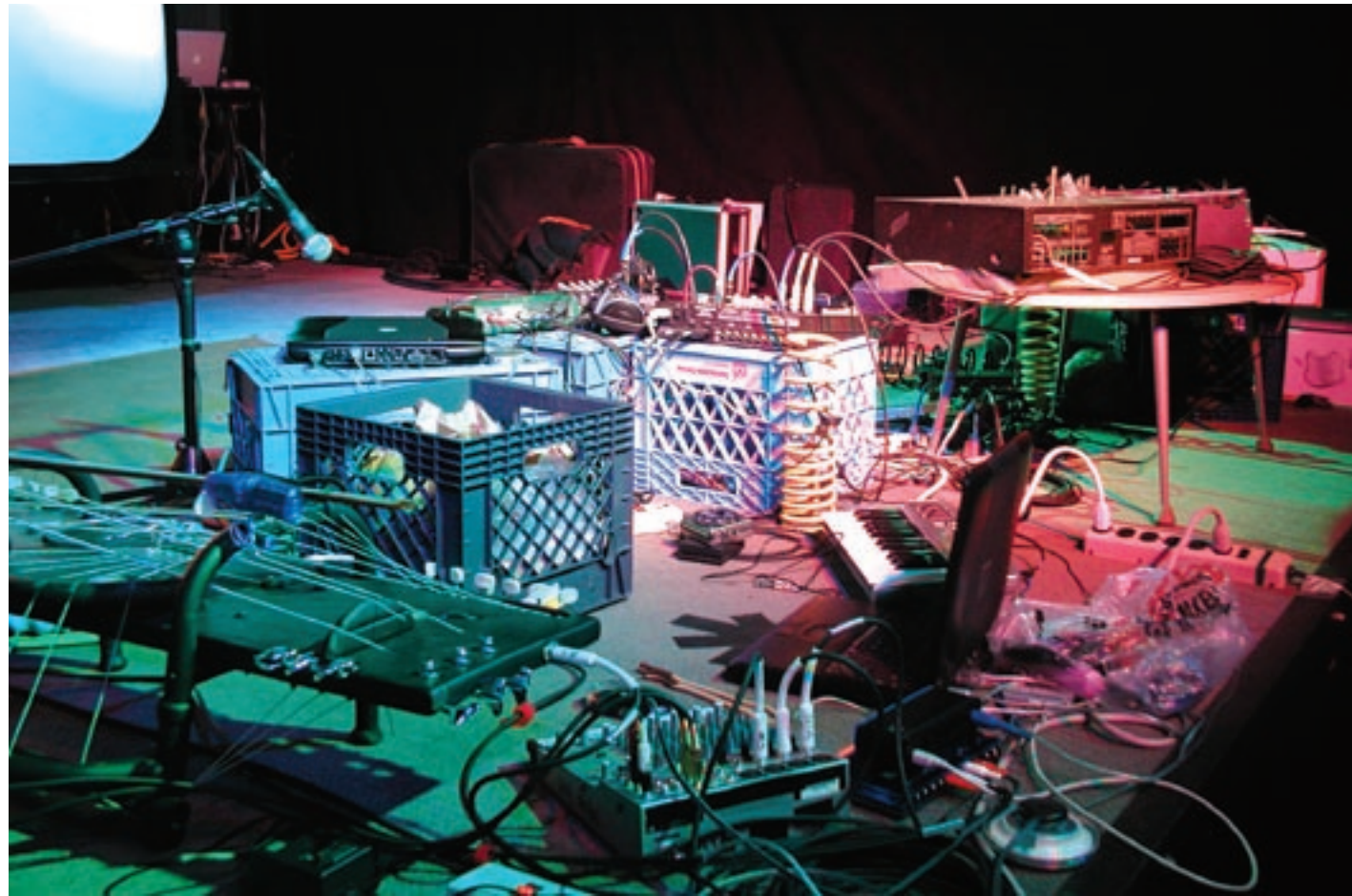


Opposite page: Krislin from Múm, recording vocals outside the studio; Ableton Live screenshots; this page (from top right): Múm, Funkstörung (Marek Vogel), Coldcut, Scanner, Geoff White



UNDETECTABLE SYMPHONIES ARE EVERYWHERE, CONTACT MICROPHONES ARE THERE TO UNCOVER THEM.

Words: Cameron Macdonald
Photos: Ian McNicol



"I LOVE PLAYING MUSIC WITH SOUNDS THAT EXIST EVERYWHERE THAT NOBODY HEARS."

At this year's San Francisco Electronic Music Festival, an ensemble recreated the ambience of a city neighborhood after being hit by bombers—their main instruments resembled stethoscopes. Sudhu Tewari took these flat, plastic-sheathed discs and implanted them in a stereo receiver pregnant with bedsprings, and also attached them to a car shock and a 2x4 board with bass guitar strings tied across. Those contraptions all kissed the air with squeals of feedback and distorted guitar-like drones when played. Near him was Mark Bartscher, who took these similar discs and taped them to a metal bowl and a cymbal rattled by the disc's feedback. And then there was Doug Michael and his homemade "kotar," a combination of a Japanese *koto* and a slide-guitar, but with those damn discs tacked below the strings—projecting thicker tones and often amplifying every noise made by audience members.

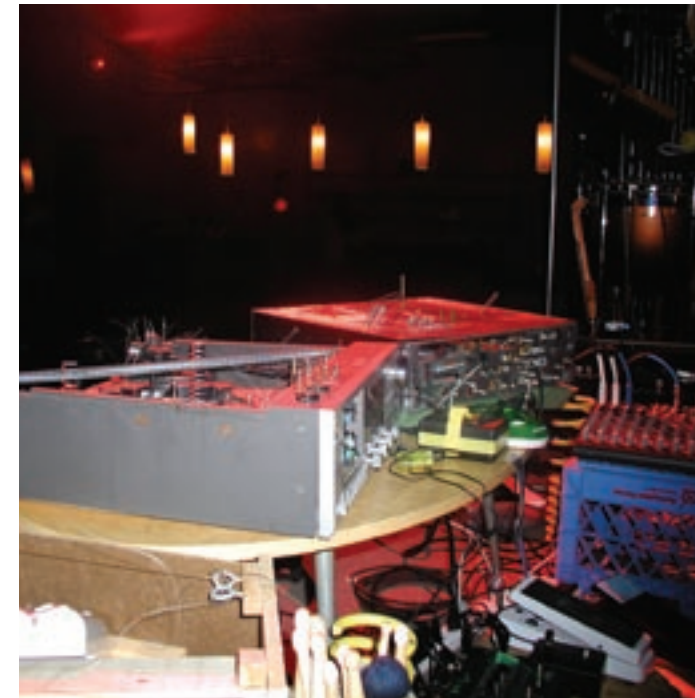
The discs happen to be tiny "contact" microphones and are the backbone of San Francisco's noise-collage band, the Contact Mic Arts Union. When attached directly to an object's surface, whether it's grass, floppy disks or the ground that an ant colony treads upon, they translate the body's vibrations into sound waves that are otherwise too soft for human ears. Explorations with this technology have enriched experi-

mental music for nearly four decades, and the mics are compatible with the frugal artist's budget.

"I love playing music with sounds that exist everywhere that nobody hears," Tewari marvels. "A lot of my springs are pretty small and wouldn't seem to be capable of producing sound, but amplified with a [contact mic], they're huge like industrial orchestras."

The CMAU employs piezos, the most commonly used species of contact mics. Piezos are essentially tiny crystals that emit voltage strong enough to amplify vibrations when tightly compressed in plastic or ceramics. These transducers are often found in medical monitoring equipment, window alarms and spy-surveillance gear—and can cost less than a dollar. With a soldering iron and a female quarter-inch adapter, a pre-amplifier piezo can be converted into a contact mic ready to be mated with any tape recorder; such piezos are best found at Radio Shack. Other, more expensive versions—including the Schaller Oyster pickup and piezo electric film (both of which capture broader sounds)—are sold online.

Richard Lerman began excavating microscopic realities with piezos in 1965 at a time when regular microphones weren't enough. "A lot of this work was generated by my asking the question: What would the world sound like if my ears were made of (you fill in



the blank?)" he recalled. Lerman later composed the 1977 piece "Travelon Gamelon" for a bicycle—where piezos were attached to its wheels and emitted gong-like sounds when spun or struck. Contact mics then became a weapon of choice for industrial noisicians like Einsturzende Neubaten and Japan's C.C.C.C., who contact mic'd a sheet metal slab to produce enough venomous noise to kill 23 men with one blow. Today, many sound artists meditate on the soft drones and spontaneity contact mics allow; examples include Coelacanth's recordings of rusting metal and Joe Colley's recordings of water seeping into every naked pore of dry clay.

Matmos's Martin Schmidt and Drew Daniel took contact mics into a more theatrical realm on their backing performance for Bjork's otherwise sober lullaby, "Cocoon," on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. The performance featured Schmidt grooming Daniel's hair and clothing to bequeath whispering noises. At concerts, they also performed what seems akin to a violin duet by bowing and plucking a contact mic'd ratcage in "For Felix (And All the Rats)."

However, Daniel mentioned that the limited sound quality of contact mics can scare away neophytes who "discover that they're not a universal sound art panacea." Tewari concurs—arguing that contact mics should

be an ingredient for digital manipulation and not the dish, as the CMAU and many other contact mic artists distill their raw sounds through digital processing.

"There's not anything amazingly special about contact mics, except that they're readily available in phones, boom boxes, computers, etcetera," he remarked. "They pick up sound that normally isn't perceived acoustically and that's interesting, but it's really up to the people using contact mics to make good music."

Richard Lerman's piezo mic construction guides: www.west.asu.edu/rlerman
The Contact Mic Arts Union's Web site: members.ispwest.com/dmichael/CMAU/index.html

An overview of what contact mics can do, along with a catalog of contact mics for sale: www.windworld.com/emi

FIVE MUST-HAVE CONTACT MIC RECORDINGS:

Richard Lerman, *A Matter of Scale and Other Pieces* (Anomalous)

A collection of live performances that includes amplified drinking straws and *Travelon Gamelon* (Folkways), his piece for bicycle.

Matmos, *A Chance to Cut is a Chance to Cure* (Matador)

One of post-techno's finest moments, complete with contact mic'd ratcages and human skulls.

Coelacanth, *Mud Wall* (Helen Scarsdale Agency)

An oceanic cauldron of drones and the sounds of the good earth fading into dust—featuring amplified metals and minerals.

Joe Colley, *Desperate Attempts at Beauty* (Ground Fault/Auscultare Research)

Explorations of microphone feedback, floating objects and clay absorbing water.

Contact Mic Arts Union, *The Yellow Disc* (Angular Momentum)

Concert recordings of the CMAU hammering out a glorious din.

opposite page: CMAU's live stage setup at a Portland, Oregon, appearance; this page: the band's performance in San Diego

IN THE STUDIO KIRK DEGIORGIO

MASTER OF MODULES, KIRK DEGIORGIO, STEPS OUT OF THE DARKNESS ON A BRAND NEW STUDIO ALBUM.

Words: Peter Nicholson

Jazz-techno fusionist, new father and Ipswich FC supporter Kirk Degiorgio likes to “fiddle with knobs and jacks.” Before you smirk about boys and their toys, take a look at his resume: With a production career beginning in 1992 (initially utilizing some of Derrick May’s gear left behind in the UK) and recordings for R&S, Planet E and his own A.R.T. label that helped chart the course of techno, Degiorgio has seamlessly integrated his love of funk and jazz with relentlessly futuristic sounds. His new album under his As One moniker, *Out of the Darkness* (Ubiquity), finds this master of modular synths branching out to pursue hip-hop and soul, enlisting the likes of Detroit artists MC Lacks and crooner Paul Randolph. Like one of his early monikers, Future/Past, Degiorgio’s approach to production is a blend of the vintage and the cutting edge. Degiorgio took time out from cheering the Blues on the pitch, to talk to us about the ultimate vintage synths!

What was the core gear that you used on *Out of the Darkness*?

My studio is all based around ProTools—that does all my sequencing and all my audio. I know a lot of people don’t really use ProTools for composing; they’ll use Logic or something with a bit more MIDI power. I find it really adequate—I was an early adopter of ProTools and I’m really comfortable and fast with it. The only other software sequencer I use is Ableton Live, which I use for various tempo changes and stuff...and try out different drums at the same tempo. Equipment wise, I really just use modular synthesizers. I have a Serge modular. I also have a modular system from Modcan in Canada, and I also have a SynthTech modular system, and the three modulars are all kinda inter-linked into one great big monster.

How long have you been working with modular synths?

Since 1999, mainly because there is no such thing as a preset on there. You have to patch in the sounds and you can’t recall the sounds, it will never be the same. It really forces you to think and it really makes every sound unique. The problem is, with trying to do chords and stuff, it’s quite time consuming—tuning the oscillators to the intervals and stuff. I tend to use [Native Instruments] Reaktor on a G4 laptop now for chords and polyphonic strings and pads and I use the modular synth for everything else.

Working with different vocalists, are there specific production techniques you might use with an MC as opposed to a singer like Paul Randolph?

I wouldn’t aggressively compress Paul’s vocal, whereas I do like a heavily compressed rap sound. In general, I have a vocal chain that I like—a vintage, early ‘70s vocal chain with a Daking pre-amp. [Daking] are based on the Trident



Studio in Soho in the early ‘70s; Elton John, David Bowie and some of the very latest Beatles tracks were done there. And I always put the vocals through the Urei 1176 as well, because that’s my favorite vocal sound with compression.

“THE THREE MODULARS ARE ALL KINDA INTER-LINKED INTO ONE GREAT BIG MONSTER.”

I understand you’re working with Jinadu on a project that might be a little more mainstream?

It’s kind of a modern Steely Dan—the chords are pretty complex. Jinadu and I are huge Steely Dan fans and obviously we don’t have the musicians and the budget to do what they did, but their chords are a huge influence on me, and I think their kind of obtuse lyrics are an influence on Jinadu as well. The tracks are coming out really deep and complex and they’re kinda bruk as well, but they’re not dancefloor, some of them are just guitar and Fender Rhodes, strings. Hopefully we’re going to use live strings, but at the moment I’m using the Garritan String Orchestra library, which is just fantastic. I’m only just scratching the surface with how to use the MIDI controls for the realism—the demos I’ve heard are just incredible.

If you won the lottery, what piece of gear that you lust after would you buy?

It just got announced this week! Don Buchla has just reissued his 200 series, the modular from the ‘70s. I think the large system is \$19,000. Pretty expensive, but not outrageously expensive. Especially since you can buy each module and build it up kinda slowly—it’s a bad thing to get into!

Out of the Darkness is out now on Ubiquity Records.
www.ubiquityrecords.com



Top to bottom: Degiorgio works on his serge modular synthesizer, synthtech modular system, Degiorgio’s fantasy gear—the Buchla Series 200 Electric Music Box and a Modcan system

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SHORT CIRCUITS HIGH CONTRAST

DRUM & BASS PRODUCER DISTILLS SOUNDS TO THEIR TRUE COLORS FOR HIS PRISMATIC SOPHOMORE RELEASE. Words: Tony Ware

With a wiry shock of black, afro-length tendrils curling in circumference from his head, Welshman Lincoln Barrett could certainly be described as bobbing and bulbous, and the alliteration passes along to the liquid funk he makes as drum & bass producer High Contrast. Part of a network of top UK producers exchanging their latest unreleased tracks digitally by Instant Messenger so as to have them played out, Barrett seeded the clubs in anticipation of his second full-length, *High Society*, which reintroduces Barrett's mellifluous filtered twitches, but with emotionally heightened bittersweet melody beneath the swells of chopped skitters. Barrett recently sat down by phone from his Cardiff studio to discuss with us how he refined these sounds, which no matter how rowdy they get *must* be more manageable than that hair.

Was there a point when you felt you'd compiled the proper studio to achieve your music objectives?

I never had an initial point because I never got in to this with an intention of it being a profession. [2002's debut] *True Colours* was begun on a basic PC with freeware demos that came with magazines or off the Internet, though before truly setting out to complete it I did have the full version of Cubase and SoundForge. After the first album I switched to a Macintosh using OSX. I like to keep things as simple as possible, strip them down to what are the most important sounds, especially that first album. It was made entirely with some dodgy hi-fi speakers, not even proper monitors like I have now. I was just tired of hearing producers who had found a formula you could discern throughout their output. I'd rather hear a badly produced track with interesting sounds and ideas than an amazingly produced track that was very pedestrian and clichéd.

Has acquiring new gear revealed things about your sound?

I have Tannoy Ellipse monitors now, because they give a good flat picture of the sound. The last two years have been learning how to keep everything relative in the mix. If something needs to be louder maybe something else can be quiet, it doesn't have to be all about compressing all things to get the volume up, ending up with a weird sound.

So, when sculpting, what tools make up your chisels, so to speak?

I do it all in Cubase, and within that plug-ins such as Native Instruments' Kompakt and Waves. I start with a musical sample, a groove, and I try to find a beat that fits that. Most of the time my beats are composite of five or six breaks from funk records. A lot of the time the groove is also based on a sample; my favorite part of it all is finding those on old



"I'D RATHER HEAR A BADLY PRODUCED TRACK WITH INTERESTING SOUNDS AND IDEAS THAN AN AMAZINGLY PRODUCED TRACK THAT WAS VERY PEDESTRIAN AND CLICHÉD."

records. Then sometimes I find a sample, recreate the idea with virtual synths and outboard stuff like E-Mu's Proteus 2000 and then take the sample out. But for the most part I'm completely virtual. I use Reason for orchestra sounds.

Do you use any hardware at all?

I've never used much outboard gear or MIDI. I just record and mess with stuff as an AIFF file in Cubase, running it through some of my favorite plug-ins like AmpliTube. It simulates classic guitar amps and effects, and it can help make the deepest bass, which I used on tracks including "Natural High," or something sound so dirty and distorted it sounds sampled off a battered record, like the guitar part a friend of mine recorded for [the patois-splattered] "Only Two Can Play." It makes things sound most gnarly.

Do you ever enter into tracks with the avowed intention of bucking, however violently, any certain convention?

What's in a name is everything in this case; contrasts are what I'm interested in and strive for. It's always looking for other angles—whether it's taking the vocal originally intended for one track and pasting it atop another, which I did with the [Dynamite MC] title track, or thrashing something about a bit in a plug-in. It's never violent, but it is intentional.

High Society is out now on Breakbeat Science-Hospital Records. www.breakbeatscience.com, www.hospitalrecords.com



Top to bottom: High Contrast, Reason screenshot, Tannoy Ellipse monitor, Cubase screenshot

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CD SHOWDOWN

SCRATCH YOUR COMPACT DISCS—INTENTIONALLY—AS YOU DIVE INTO THE FUTURE WITH FOUR DOPE DIGITAL TURNTABLES. Words: Ross Hogg

IT EVEN HOLDS UP LIKE A CHAMP DURING HIGH-SPEED SCRATCHING AND SUBTLE ADJUSTMENTS IN THE MIX.



Clockwise from top left: Numark CDX, Vestax CDX-05, Pioneer CDJ1000 MKII, Technics CD DJ SL-DZ1200



I'll admit it: I'm vinyl retentive. I love everything about the medium: dancehall 45s, gatefold albums, scratching. So when my editor told me he wanted me to do a roundup of the latest CD turntables, I was skeptical, to say the least. But after spending some time on a two-CD-turntable setup (the Pioneer and Numark models mentioned below), I was pleasantly surprised.

All four models featured here share certain features: digital out capabilities, pitch lock (adjusts the speed but not the key/pitch), forward/reverse play and digital cueing. So how different could they be? I soon found out.

Two years ago, Pioneer gave us the first viable CD turntable, the CDJ 1000; now they're back with an update of the industry standard. New features on the the **Pioneer CDJ1000MKII** include a more precise tempo slider that's now adjustable to +/- 100% and delay-free cueing. It can do all sorts of thing a record player can't: create loops in real time, remember up to three cue points, save .wav data on a multimedia card and more. For die-hard vinyl lovers, the cue or

toggle surface (the raised wheel that replaces a piece of vinyl for backspin cueing) takes a little getting used to, but the learning curve isn't all that steep.

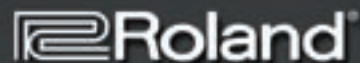
The **Numark CDX** is exactly the kind of product that could usher even the most diehard Luddites into the digital age. This unit looks almost identical to Numark's regular turntables, minus a tone arm, and features a 12" vinyl record as the toggle surface—a first on the CD turntable market. It stores up to 3,000 cue points, has built-in effects (echo, kill, sonar, filter and chop) controlled by a jog wheel and features an easy-to-read LCD display (and a slightly faster load time than the Pioneer CDJ). Best of all, it really feels like you're playing records; it even holds up like a champ during high-speed scratching and subtle adjustments in the mix (spindle-pinchers, stand up!).

Vestax, long a front runner in the mixer game, throws its hat in the digital turntable ring with the **Vestax CDX-05**. Design-wise, it seems to take its cues from Pioneer; the unit has a very similar layout to the CDJ 1000. It features three cue points, real-time looping (with a jog dial for fine tuning) and the mainstays of other products, but also has a separate 8-second sampler and multiple beat-

syncable effects (flange, delay and filter). This unit is the most affordable of the four.

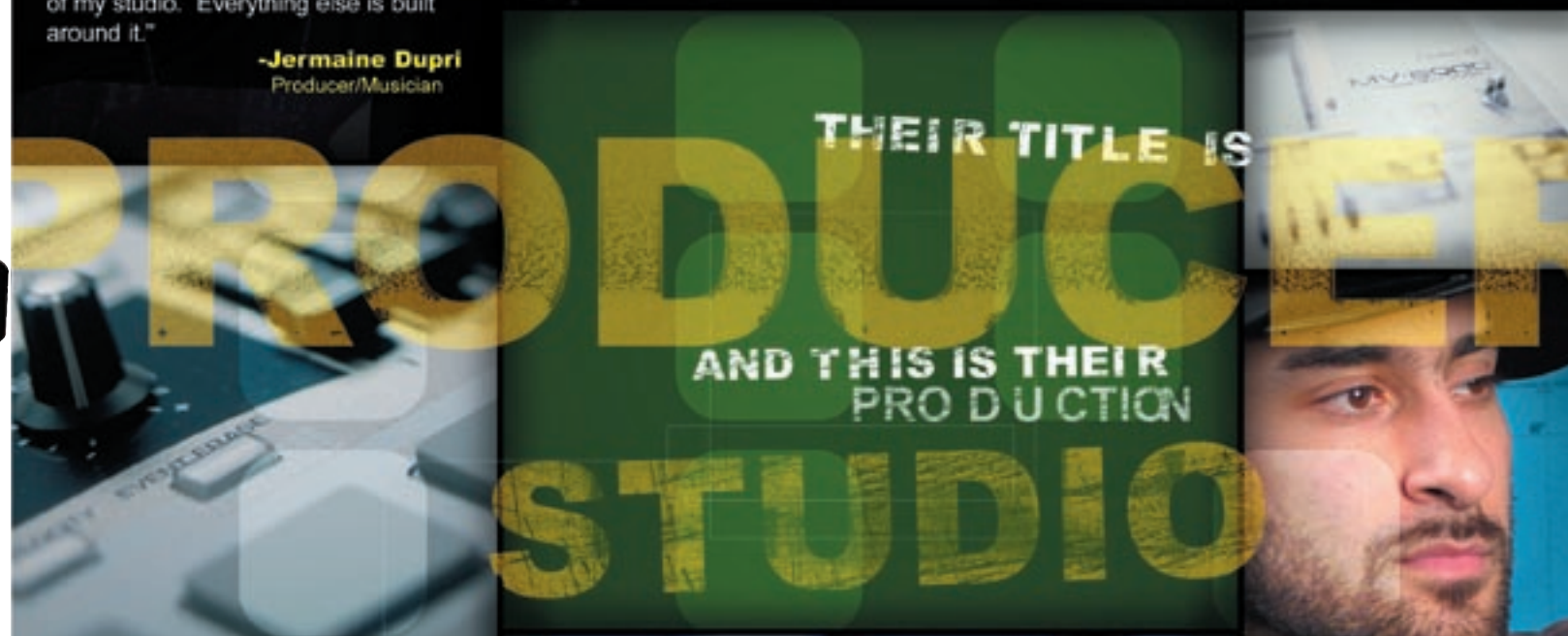
Technics has long held the crown among analog turntables, but can they recreate that success digitally? They're giving it a shot with **Technics SL-DZ1200**. Special features like four sample pads with up to 32 seconds of memory apiece (each with its own volume control) allow you to remix on the fly. But what most vinyl lovers will respond to are the creature comforts; it looks like a "real turntable," right down to the 1200-style start/stop button, spinning platter with the trademark Technics dots, the same direct drive motor as in the analog 1200 and the red strobe light you've come to love.

Pioneer CDJ 1000 MKII MSRP: \$1299; www.pioneerprodj.com
Numark CDX MSRP: \$1199; www.numark.com
Vestax CDX-05 MSRP: \$750; www.vestax.com
Technics CD DJ SL-DZ1200 MSRP: \$1199.95; www.panasonic.com



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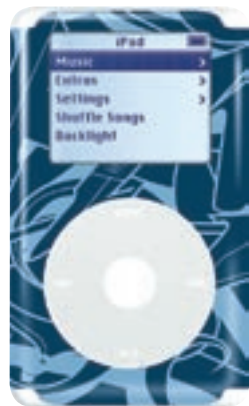
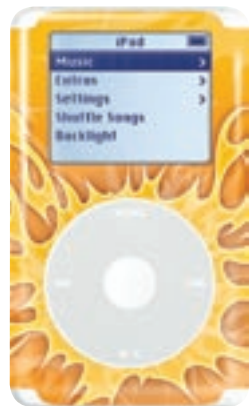
TRAILER LOADS OF TUNES

XLR8R LABS' CHIEF TECHNICAL OFFICER REPORTS ON THREE 20GB PORTABLE AUDIO PLAYERS THAT HE PUMPED FULL OF JAMS. Words: Andrew Smith



Clockwise from top left: iRiver H120, Sony Network Walkman NW-DJ1, HP iPod 20GB

IRIVER IS GIVING ITS CUSTOMERS MORE OPTIONS, NOT LESS.



SONY NETWORK WALKMAN NW-HD1

Sony has finally stepped into the ring with their direct attack on the iPod, which has been crushing their Walkman sales. Taking a step forward, away from their low-capacity memory stick-based players of the past, Sony has followed Apple's model and jacked this new player up to 20GB. Even more akin to Apple, they have linked this new Walkman with their connect.com online music store, which offers tracks for download only in Sony's proprietary ATRAC3 format.

Pros: This thing is tiny at 3.5" x 2.5", and the battery life is nearly 3X the iPod!

Cons: The most expensive 20GB player on the market, no known Mac support

Audio Formats Supported: ATRAC3, MP3, WMA, WAV

Specs: 20GB, 30-hour battery, USB cradle, line-out

MSRP: \$399.95; www.sonymstyle.com

IRIVER H120

As Sony and Apple try to lock down the marketplace with proprietary audio formats and online stores, iRiver is giving its customers more options, not less. With both PC and limited Mac support, optical ins and outs, a remote with a LCD screen and a radio built in, the iRiver folks are definitely going for the geeky user who wants a little more, but at basically the same price as an iPod. Also available is the H140 with 40GB storage (\$429.99), and look out for the upcoming H300 series with full color screens.

Pros: Good battery life, input jack for recording, sturdy design, lots of features

Cons: Lacks full Mac support, somewhat complicated interface

Audio Formats Supported: MP3, WMA, ASF, WAV, OGG

Specs: 20GB, 16-hour battery, built-in voice recorder and FM tuner, optical in/out, LCD remote control

MSRP: \$329.99; www.iriver.com

HP IPOD 20GB

Hewlett Packard has jumped in bed with Apple, and is presenting a repackaged iPod for the much larger world of Windows users. Yes it's the same iPod you all know and love, but this one ships with all sorts of doo-dads for the PC crowd, including iTunes for Windows, some devilishly hot printable "tattoos" that you can customize your HP iPod with, and a year of HP tech support for the not-so tech savvy.

Pros: Mac and PC compatible, same sexy iPod that's dominating the market

Cons: The main drawback is its short battery life, and we'd really like an audio input jack.

Audio Formats Supported: AAC, MP3, Audible, AIFF, Apple lossless, WAV

Specs: 20GB, 12-hour battery, synch calendars and contacts with Palm and Entourage software

MSRP: \$299.99; www.hp.com/music



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Once the TT-M1 is fitted to your turntable and connected to a either the **TASCAM CD-X1500** or **CD-X1700***, you can use the controls of the turntable such as start/stop, tempo slider, power on/off for winding down and winding up, and of course the turntable's platter for scratching, pitch bending and back-spinning—all to control the CD audio.



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A LITTLE OF THE OLD IN AND OUT

There are a lot of important things in life—family, personal security, the Philadelphia Eagles making the postseason—and it takes a creative person to remember their dad’s birthday *and* when the next Sixers home game is. But these are the interfaces to having a happy human life. Likewise, the most important part of digital recording is the audio interface. There’s nothing as important as the point where analog sounds turn into ones and zeros to attain a sparkling sound from live instruments and microphone recordings. Three or four years ago, it was a pleasure to have a 16-bit audio interface going into a not-quite-blazingly fast USB port. Luckily, technology has gone into warp speed, so there are many affordable options for turning audio into data. FireWire audio inputs are of a higher quality than ever before and, in terms of data transferring speeds, USB devices are like a Honda automatic compared to FireWire’s BMW-esque five-speed swiftness.

Three of the best new options are **M-Audio’s FireWire 1814**, **Edirol’s FA-101** and the **Presonus Firepod**. All have at least 24-bit/96k interfaces, i.e. as good as you’ll ever need unless you have an inhuman ear and listen to very dynamic classical music. Depending on the settings, the M-Audio has an astonishing 18-in/14-out setup, the Presonus 10-in and 10-out and the Edirol 10-in/10-out. Why would someone with a project studio be crazy enough to need so many ins and outs?

Turns out there are several reasons, the two most relevant being drum set recording and surround sound, where multiple ins or outs can be recorded independently into different tracks of your sequencer and processed separately. Additionally, multiple pre-cueing in a DJ or performance program is a plus. Imagine playing a show using Ableton Live, and having each member able to hear an independent mix.

Each of the three units has pluses and minuses. For the M-Audio 1814, two headphone jacks (with independent volume control and a DJ ‘cue’ feature) are a

IMAGINE PLAYING A SHOW USING ABLETON LIVE, AND HAVING EACH MEMBER ABLE TO HEAR AN INDEPENDENT MIX.



subtle but excellent addition to anyone expecting to work with a partner or band mate. The Presonus wins points for having *eight* XLR inputs (get it? *XLR8R*), each with a preamp (the M-Audio and Edirol have two, the rest being 1/4 inch ins or outs).

Size-wise, the Edirol is the smallest of the bunch at half a rack space, great for gigging with a laptop. That said, while the Presonus takes up a full rack space, you could conceivably use it without a mixer, due to independent volume controls. If you’re looking for ADAT sync, the M-Audio is the choice, while both the M-Audio and Presonus have S/PDIF capability.

All three are extremely easy to set up, and have a Midi in and out. With Mac’s OSX, you simply plug in the FireWire device, go to the preferences section of your sequencing/recording program, and you’re off and recording. If you’re planning on skimping on one aspect of your recording setup, this is not the place to do it. Analog to digital converters are one of the most important aspects to recording. Just like box seats at the Eagles game—only the best for champions! *Jesse Terry*

Presonus Firepod (top) MSRP: \$799.95; www.presonus.com
M-Audio FireWire 1814 (middle) MSRP: \$749.95; www.m-audio.net
Edirol FA-101 (bottom) MSRP: \$695; www.edirol.com

IF YOU ARE A NERD, DOEPFER IS HERE TO HOOK YOU UP.



REALLY GOOD DOPE

Have you ever dreamed that sliding your finger around on a table would change different aspects of the sounds you’re making on your synth, your laptop synthesizers, or your MIDI controlled Commodore 64? If you are a nerd, Doepfer is here to hook you up. The **Doepfer R2M MIDI Ribbon Controller** comes in two pieces, one is a strip of ribbon tape about one and half feet long, and the other is a box with a lot of buttons and a screen. By taking account of the pressure and position of your finger on the strip, you can control parameters of your sound or video. Because this ribbon can generate both MIDI and CV signals at once, you can control both the programs in your laptop and your dusty Moog or Sequential Circuits synthesizer, i.e you can control both MIDI and analog gear. Dope, for sure. *Jesse Terry*

Doepfer R2M MIDI Ribbon Controller MSRP: \$275; www.doepfer.de

WAY BETTER THAN MY SHIT

I like to play records. Not on some crazy behind-the-back, cutting with my nose, DMC finalist vibe. All that showmanship stuff is cool, but for me it’s more about just playing songs, whether solo Brian Wilson style (in my room), rocking a backyard barbeque or hyping a drunken dancefloor. Due to an ongoing condition called poverty, my personal turntable situation lies somewhere between charmingly low budget and laughably amateurish. My decks are not quite old enough to bump 78s, but they have been mistaken for laserdisc players.

That said, this new **Vestax PDX-2000 MK II** is tight. For one, it has the straight and short, extra-heavy tone arm to reduce unwanted swipes when you pick up or put down your drink. The adjustable weight is very heavy, so random skips are more or less impossible unless you suffer from violent uncontrollable seizures. In addition to the usual pitch control, it’s also got the Ultra Pitch, which will tweak your record’s speed up or down by a hefty 50%, ideal when you want to do some extreme beat-matching or get the Nordic death metal cookie monster vocals going on.

The start/stop mechanism is almost flawless, with adjustable settings for both, in case you want a more gradual approach. You can easily play in reverse, the power switch is out of the way in the top left corner, and there’s also space for a light. The unit is light enough to tote around with ease (plastic outer shell) but not so flimsy that your dry ice machine blows it over. It also won the 2004 Music Masse International Award (whatever that is), and your boy Mixmaster Mike uses it, so odds are it’s more than good enough for you. Now go buy it. *Brolin Winning*

Vestax PDX 2000 MK II MSRP: \$870; www.vestax.com



THE START/STOP MECHANISM IS ALMOST FLAWLESS, WITH ADJUSTABLE SETTINGS FOR BOTH.

THE 1000 IS THE MPC FOR THE MASSES.



THE HIP-HOP STANDARD

While longtime producers fondly recall their Casio FZ-1s, Emu SP-12s and Ensoniq EPS-16s, the vast majority of people using samples these days rely on **Akai’s venerable MPC series**. From the original MPC 60 to the 2000, 3000 and now 4000 models, the MPC has become the studio weapon of choice for big names like Dr. Dre, Kanye West and David Banner (often seen toting his MPC around in videos) all the way down to the latest crop of bedroom producers. In short, if you’re sampling, chances are you’re doing it on an MPC.

It ain’t easy to stay on top of the pile, but Akai is making moves to keep its position. First off, in keeping with the consolidation trend that has already swept the media and the recording industries, the company has signed a distribution deal with Numark (the equipment company, not the DJ, though it’d be pretty fresh if they signed a deal with the DJ, too). Akai will still design, create, and manufacture MPCs, but they will have the added leverage of Numark’s distribution channels. What does this mean? Most likely more access to the MPC of your choice, though the long-term effects of the partnership remain to be seen.

Furthermore, didja ever notice how Akai went from the MPC 60 straight to the MPC 2000, completely bypassing the idea MPC 1000 like it was a Wollensak reel-to-reel in an ADAT world? Well, it turns out that perhaps there was a method to the madness, as Akai is introducing the MPC 1000. If you go by the numbers, the 4000 is the top-of-the-line professional model; the 1000, on the other hand, is the MPC for the masses, perfect for the fledgling producer who doesn’t have a lot of money but has plenty of stuff waiting to be sampled and a jones for tapping big square pads for hours on end.

Now you can learn about sampling, filtering, chopping, truncating, triggering, programming and all those *other-ings* producers like to gab about, while simultaneously becoming familiar with the centerpiece of most working studios so that you too can someday tote your sampler around in your own video. *Pete Babb*
Akai MPC 1000 MSRP: \$999; www.akaipro.com



WITH THEIR SA-5 ALLIES ALLSTAR BEATDOWN BATTLE, STANTON BROKE NEW GROUND.

WHAT'S UP SA-?

Stanton has been on the leading edge of the two-channel turntablist mixer market for several years now, thanks in large part to their successful collaborations with DJ Focus and the addition of Penny & Giles faders. With their SA-5 Allies Allstar Beatdown battle, Stanton broke new ground; it's the first-ever battle mixer without a single rotary knob. The SA-5 shares several features with the SA-8, the DJ Focus signature model, whose namesake created individual direct outputs for multi-track recording, ergonomically molded knobs and faders, post-fader cue (for headphone practice) and OSII optical switches for clickless transforms.

Now, Stanton announces the latest in the series: The SA-12, DJ Craze's signature model. True to the incredibly innovative man for whom it's named, this mixer comes with a removable effects module (MOD-1) with pitch shift, delay and flanger. The effects are assignable to either channel as well as the mic, and the unit even comes with a footpedal output for further effects control. *Ross Hogg*

Stanton SA-12 DJ Craze Signature Mixer MSRP: \$399.95; www.stantondj.com

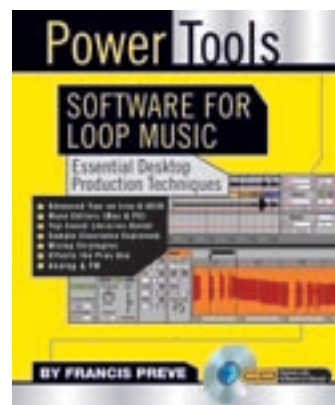
QUICKIE POWER TOOLS FOR LOOP PROGRAMMING

Adding to their stellar Power Tools series, Backbeat Books have delivered the answer to all you aspiring DJs looking to get into loop-based music. With chapters on Ableton Live, Acid Pro, Recycle, Apple Soundtrack and mixing and sampling in general, this is a great book for someone looking for tips and tricks to get them started out—it even looks like *Beatmaking for Dummies*. *Jesse Terry*

Pros: Easy to understand articles on the best loop production software setups. Includes 250Mbs of license-free loops.

Cons: If you own one of these programs, you probably don't need the info on the others.

Power Tools for Loop Programming MSRP: \$24.95; www.backbeatbooks.com



STYLISH STYL!

Numark and Stanton are two of the top turntable and mixer makers in the business, so you'd expect no less from their needles—and neither company disappoints. Numark's CC-1 is a versatile little needle, good for scratching or all around DJ use. The CX-1 is the mix-tape king, with slightly lower output but excellent for heavy scratching, as it's Tony Touch's signature model.

Stanton's needles are similarly designated for different uses. For those who need a quiet needle for excellent reproduction in the home and remix studio, the 680 EL II is for you. Those who have a second residency at the club should go for the Groovemaster II Pro, which excels in making sure the record doesn't skip. *Jesse Terry*

Numark CC-1 (top left) MSRP: \$109.99;

Numark CX-1 (bottom left) MSRP: \$99;

www.numark.com

Stanton 680 EL II (top right) MSRP: \$80;

Stanton Groovemaster II Pro (bottom right) MSRP:

\$199 (pair); www.stantondj.com



...A VERSATILE LITTLE NEEDLE, GOOD FOR SCRATCHING OR ALL AROUND DJ USE.



...EXCELS IN MAKING SURE THE RECORD DOESN'T SKIP.



THREE TIMES DOPE

From the moment it's turned on, Spectrasonic's Trilogy Total Bass Module allows one to feel creative—the sounds it contains are both instantly gratifying and easily manipulated. And while there are a million and one soft synths that purport to produce "bass," the vast majority of them (usually those based on '70s and '80s synths) are sorely lacking in the low-end department. Trilogy's frequency response in the 20-40 Hz range is nothing short of monstrous, yet the acoustic and electric bass sounds are realistic and sure to satisfy those of a more commercial bent. Spectrasonic have even taken the extra step of providing varying degrees of "finger" noise to each preset, shading the tones with the natural squeaks and scrapes inescapably present in the live recording process.

Those who prefer to design their own sounds can take advantage of Trilogy's wide variety of filters, LFOs and envelopes, and every layer is easily cross-fadeable with any other layer, providing a huge dynamic palette upon which to play. My only criticisms would be that the filters are not all that powerful, and the plug-in can be quite a drain on your CPU's resources. The rewards, however, definitely outweigh the drawbacks, and producers of nearly any style should be more than pleased by Trilogy's versatility and precise bass sounds. *Alex Pozell*

Spectrasonic's Trilogy Total Bass Module MSRP: \$349; www.spectrasonics.com

TRILOGY'S FREQUENCY RESPONSE IN THE 20-40 HZ RANGE IS NOTHING SHORT OF MONSTROUS.



PITCH IS A BITCH

Skill in singing is no longer the necessity that it once was. Software versions of hardware that once cost thousands of dollars can now fix the tuning of your voice or instrument on the fly, to a particular scale, at a specific speed of correction. Just about every major studio is using a pitch corrector like **Yamaha Pitch Fix** (or the originator, Antares Auto-Tuner). Need to fix Britney's missed note? Add a hook to a Dirty Vegas chorus? Your girlfriend/boyfriend wants to add warbly guest vocals on a track? The Pitch Fix can make even Linda McCartney sound good. When you push it further, you can get interesting vocal effects as well. For instance, if you've ever been unfortunate enough to get Cher's "Do You Believe" stuck in your head you know the sound. But hey, with programs like Pitch Fix, now you can sing, too. All you need is plastic surgery and a few ribs removed, and you'll be set. *Jeoee Terry*

Yamaha Pitch Fix MSRP: \$299; www.yamaha.com



THE PITCH FIX CAN MAKE EVEN LINDA MCCARTNEY SOUND GOOD.



SOFT AND HARD

Dim the lights and chill the hooch, because you are about to witness the sensual coupling of two strangers who've been flirting for quite a long time. Yes, tonight is the night that your computer is totally going to hump your keyboard. Of course with any hot "machine-on-machine" action there's bound to be some good news and bad news. The bad news is that the sex was unprotected (also, your computer is a total pervert). The good news is that despite the awkward, unholy union, the kid looks pretty good.

It's called the **Open Labs neKo 64** and it definitely presents us geeks with a novel concept—consolidating your computer, professional soundcard and keyboard controllers into one streamlined machine.

On the surface, you're getting all the comforts of hardware: 61 semi-weighted keys, ten 24/96 outputs (two are balanced XLR) and ten 24/96 inputs (also including two XLR with preamps), MIDI in/through/out ability, pitch and mod wheels, SPDIF I/O, wordclock I/O, 24 rotary control knobs, 16 fader-style controls, an assignable footswitch and a color 15" LCD touch screen.

So what? Maybe your keyboard already has all or most of these features, right? Well here's the genius part—instead of tossing a ton of money into research and development to create a one-of-a-kind proprietary system for the guts of the neKo 64, the folks at Open Labs realized that the soft synth movement has already produced faithful reproductions of all the great synthesizers and is also currently responsible for creating the most groundbreaking synths, samplers and audio sequencers on the market. As the saying goes—if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

When you open up the neKo 64, don't be surprised when you see the familiar components of your studio PC: a batch of RAM (up to eight gigs), a standard 64-bit micro-ATX motherboard which can be swapped and upgraded, an 80 gig hard drive and a host of PC ports accessible from the exterior such as six USB ports (two in front, two in back and two inside for connecting and protecting those damn dongles), two FireWire ports, a VGA monitor port, an Ethernet port, two PS/2 ports for an external mouse and keyboard and four full-length PCI slots suitable for even the largest sound cards. There's also a CDRW drive built into the front and a QWERTY keyboard and track pad on the workstation's main panel to make the computer-inclined feel right at home.

On the whole, the neKo 64 is a fairly priced, powerful, well-executed digital music workstation that has logically appeared at a time when advancements in software are outpacing their hardware counterparts. Still, I'm curious to see how electronic music composers will react to the idea of their computer and keyboard cohabitating. Whatever side of the hardware/software debate you've found yourself on, the reality is that even with the ability to expand and upgrade systems, people usually replace their computers every two to four years. The obsolescence of even the most advanced computer is simply presumed. On the other hand, hardware advocates often worship their vintage Moogs and AKAI MPCs as though they were family heirlooms.

The Open Labs neKo 64 is definitely a new breed of machine, born from familiar parents. Only time will tell us which parent it will take after most. *Chachi Jones*
Open Labs neKo 64 MSRP: \$5,895 (base system), \$9,295 (deluxe system);
www.openlabs.com

TONIGHT IS THE NIGHT THAT YOUR COMPUTER IS TOTALLY GOING TO HUMP YOUR KEYBOARD.



IT HAS BEEN REALLY NICE TO GET AWAY FROM MIDI PROGRAMMING, WHICH WAS REALLY BOGGING ME DOWN AFTER AWHILE.



N.LN GETS COMPLETE SF ELECTRONIC PRODUCER N.LN TAKES ON NATIVE INSTRUMENTS COMPLETE II

With so many options available in the average software studio, it's becoming more and more difficult to decide on the tools you need to make music. With recent releases on Badman and Highpoint Lowlife Records (as well as guitar-playing duties in the band Film School) Nyles Lannon has chosen the exceptionally robust package of software **Komplete II** offered by **Native Instruments** (a suite that contains **Reaktor 4**, **Battery**, **B-4 organ**, **Absynth 2**, **Kontakt** and much more). Here's why.

N.LN: "Making electronic music has become much more of an experimentation process for me recently as I have gotten more comfortable with using certain programs, especially Reaktor. The whole process by which I make electronic music has changed since I started using this program. Making music is much more of a live experience, where you are actually playing an instrument, tweaking things on the fly and recording it. With Reaktor you first focus on creating the means to making music—you create the tool, and then the music happens as a product of that, so it is a lot more conceptual and experimental by nature. It has been really nice to get away from MIDI programming, which was really bogging me down after awhile. Nothing kills me more now than looking at a drum editor! It's like hell programming those things.

"On n.ln *Astronomy for Children* (Highpoint Lowlife Records), I used Reaktor mostly for cutting up and shuffling beats, for creating new grooves, randomizing and granular synthesis. On my more recent n.lannon *Chemical Friends* (Badman Records)—which has more of an acoustic pop sound—I used it for creating different synth sounds that were new to my ear. I also used Battery, a sampler VST instrument, for many of the beats—which have a great interface and some really fun looping features." *Jeoee Terry*

Native Instruments Komplete II MSRP: \$1149;
www.nativeinstruments.de, www.nlannon.com



QUICKIE KORG CR-4 CASSETTE RECORDER

What? Someone is actually developing *new* cassette four-track machines in this digital day and age? Korg just happens to have done a very good job with it, adding features like built-in powered speakers and Toneworks effects, including chorus, flange, delay, reverb, guitar amp modeling and more. With four tracks to record on, making your demo will be a breeze. *Jeoee Terry*

Pros: It's easy to use and it looks cool.
Cons: Do they still make cassettes?
Korg CR-4 Cassette Recorder MSRP: \$399; www.korg.com

A WHOLE NEW TRIBE

Although audio slicing and editing is the hot conversation topic for all software enthusiasts, the need for a hands-on device capable of real time tweaks is still in heavy demand. Korg had originally combated the Roland Groovebox market with their introduction of the **Korg Electribe S MK2** line of production tools, and to stay current while offering innovative features, the line has received a drastic facelift.

The Electribe ES MK2 features some similar traits of its older brother, such as an easy-to-program on-board sequencer, multi-timbral capability and pristine audio sampling quality. Although the general layout is just as intuitive as its predecessor, this unit offers even more sonic variables, such as 11 effects (reverb, phaser, ringmod, binary decimator) and a separate section dedicated to delay effects (MIDI sync-able of course). Each one of the effect parameters is assignable to automation, leaving your hands free to further the funk.

With some hardware devices, the task of embarking fresh noise onto the internal hard disk can often be a challenge; however there is little guesswork, as the ES MK2 rapidly and efficiently invites samples on board with a few short keystrokes. After your sound is captured it is essentially ready to sequence with a push of a button, while even more manipula-



tion is available in a quickly accessible menu. Start and end times are painless to program, while several groove splice functions can analyze transients, detecting attack points in rhythm sample or drum loop. Truncate your work when you're done, and you too will soon be swaying with the sultans of techno swing. *Praxis*

Korg ES MK2 MSRP: \$599; www.korg.com

EACH ONE OF THE EFFECT PARAMETERS IS ASSIGNABLE TO AUTOMATION, LEAVING YOUR HANDS FREE TO FURTHER THE FUNK.



IT'S A VIRTUAL DRUM MACHINE PLAYER THAT LETS YOU PLAY UP TO EIGHT DIFFERENT REX FILES AT ONCE.

DRUM ROLL PLEASE

Sweden's **E-Lab** enters the drum arena with **Obsession**, a library that claims to be all about "Neptunian" beats and "Timbalandish" grooves. Invented adjectives aside, it's a virtual drum machine player that lets you play up to eight different REX (ReCycle) files at once, applying all sorts of filtering, skewing and envelopes to each channel. It also comes with a huge DVD filled with a library of drum loops. As with other sample libraries on the market these days, make sure you have the gigabytes (3.7) available to store it. If you have ReCycle 2.0 installed, you can import your REX files into Obsession—a huge plus.

Unfortunately, it doesn't work both ways—you can't draw on Obsession's library as rex files and use them in Reason's REX Player, for instance. There are tons and tons of great beats available here, in many tempos and styles, and the possibilities for mixing and matching are endless. It's almost too easy at times, and it makes me wonder if in a few years second rate beat-heads like myself will be replaced by lame robotic beat-heads. At least we'll all be nodding to the same beats rather than nodding off to the standard breaks. *Jeoss Terry*

E-lab Obsession MSRP: \$ 299.95; www.e-lab.se

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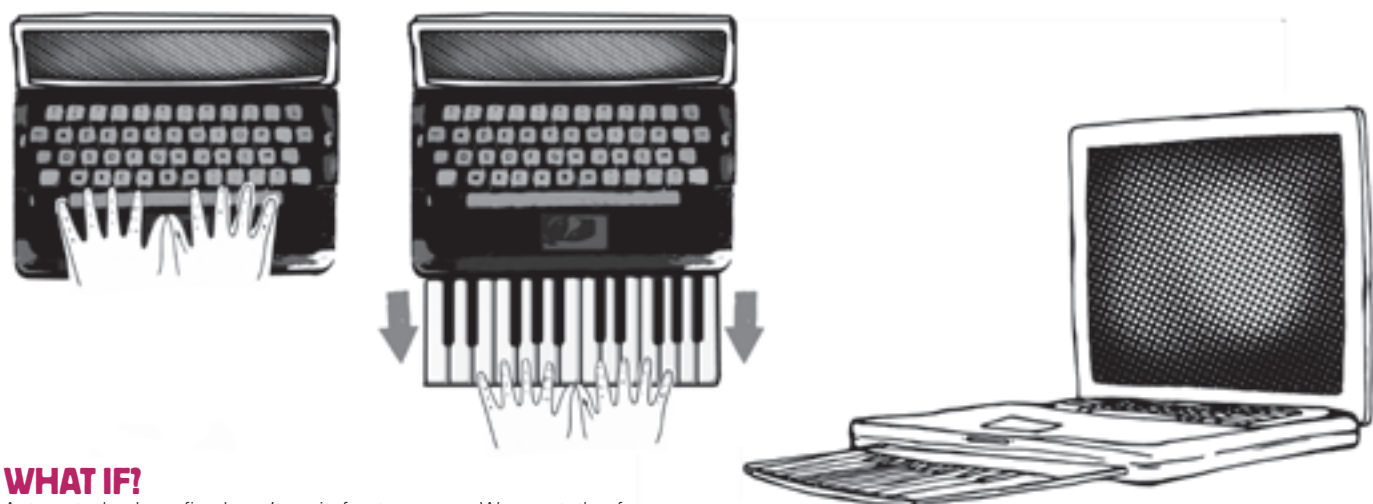
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WHAT IF?

A true technology fiend can't wait for tomorrow. We want the future now (preferably delivered to our doorstep next-day). Within that completely logical spirit we present three brilliant strokes of genius that haven't yet been manufactured.

First and foremost, a **Touchscreen Mixer** has to be the next logical step in the evolution of both the MIDI controller and digital sequencing. No more mouse or hardware controller surface, you control your mix on the screen using a digit and your computer screen's pop-out holographic interface. Now just remember—don't order pizza before making music, or you'll have a grease-smudged blur to see through.

Next, while looking at some of the new CD turntables coming out recently, we noticed a few serious deficiencies. For one, why make a big, bulky turntable that plays CDs with a vinyl touch, and not make it able to play vinyl as well? Who wants to carry around three turntables instead of two? Well, we've solved that problem by designing this model to play both. And while we're at it, it also plays MP3s, MiniDiscs, 78s and eight track tapes.

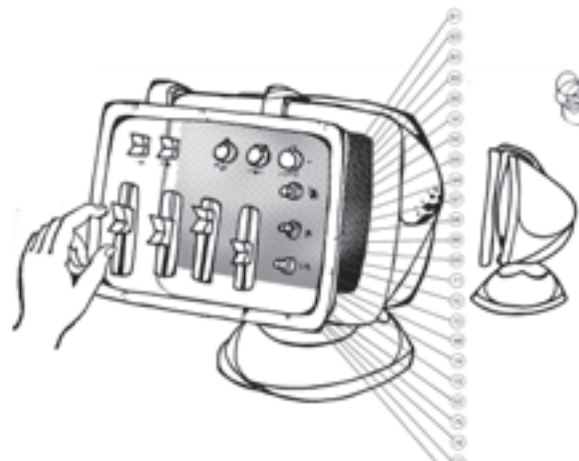
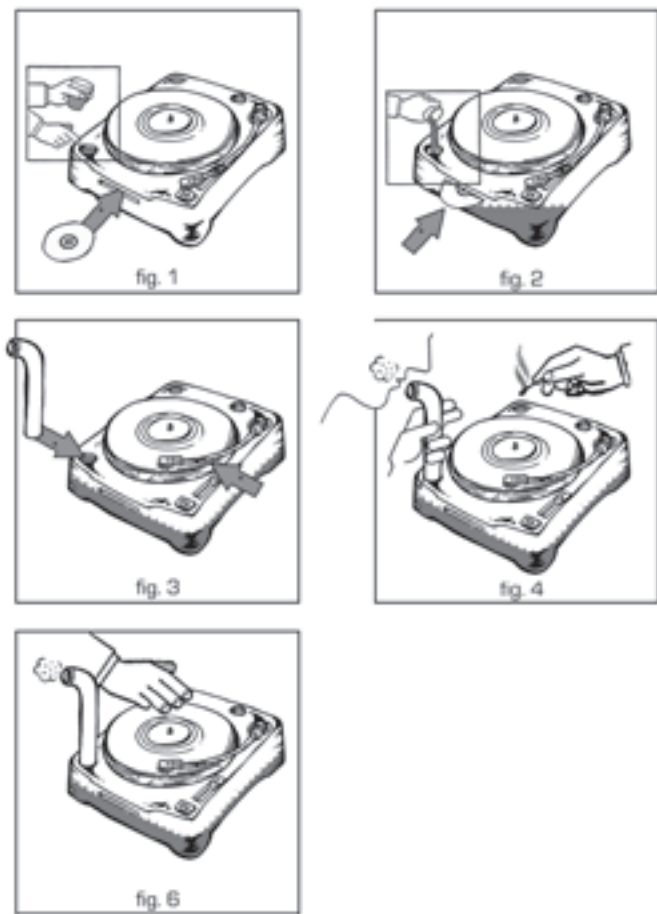
Weight is another problem with today's turntables. They need to be heavy so the records don't skip, but damn, I'm lazy and don't want to haul that weight around at the end of the night. So why not have a turntable that's water filled? As soon as you get to the show, you fill it up, boom! Yeah, maybe there's a little electrocution hazard, but whatever. Our engineers balanced that out with a built-in water filtration pipe. That's right, it's the world's first **Digital Record Player-Bong**. *Irie.*

Next up: laptops have made music-making a portable process, and anyone who has seen Dr. Dre in that Coors Light commercial knows how badass it is to get drunk and make music on a plane. Our idea: a **laptop with a pop-out piano keyboard**. Instant musical gratification.

For those who can't wait, there's a free utility made by Frederik Olofsson called VMK 1.6, which turns your laptop's typing keyboard keys into a MIDI piano keyboard: <http://w1.867.telia.com/~u86705274/pages/code-apps.html>.

And all you companies out there: If you bite our ideas, we're going to sue the shit out of you (unless you donate a couple of the bong-turntables)! *Jease Terry and Tomas, illustrations Aaron Terry*

A TRUE TECHNOLOGY FIEND CAN'T WAIT FOR TOMORROW.



Dream gear brought to life (top to bottom): laptop with pop-out piano keyboard, digital record player-bong, touchscreen mixer

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